

New Life
for
Your Sunday School

by

James H. Robinson

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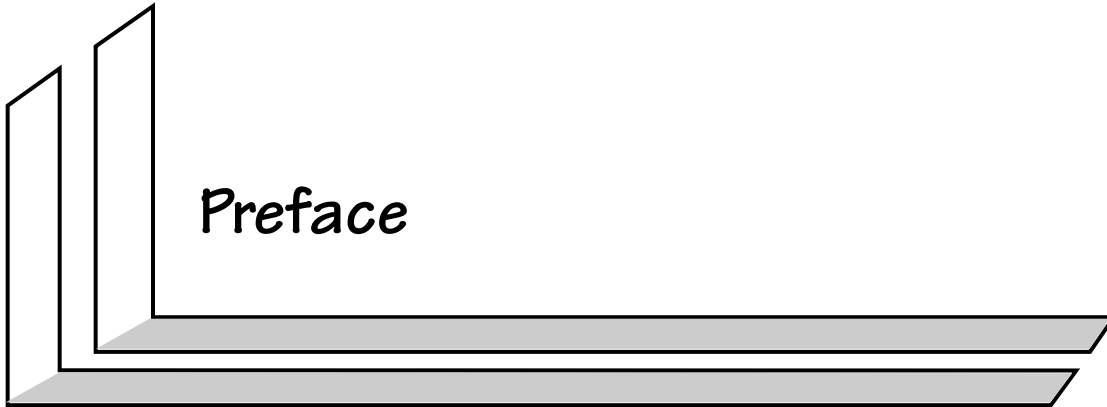
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Preface

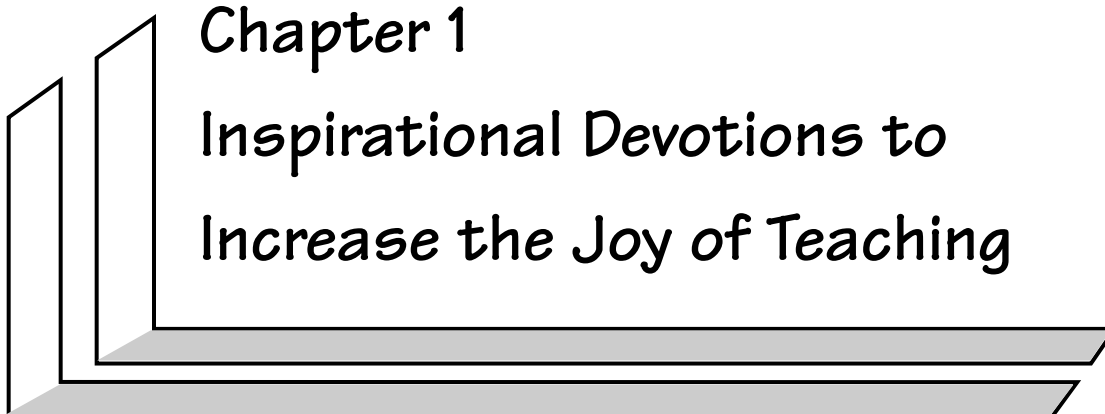
When a busy pastor or Sunday school superintendent conducts a Sunday school teachers meeting, his mind is on the upcoming lessons. He wants to help the teachers understand and teach God's truth.

However, he knows there are many other things he should be concerned about. "I wish I had a good opening devotion," he thinks as he walks into the church, "one that would encourage my teachers."

"What are some practical things I can do to make our Sunday school more visible to our congregation?" asks the Sunday school superintendent at the end of the meeting.

This book gives you the additional material you need to make your Sunday school staff meetings as productive as possible. The devotions stress the importance of the Sunday school teacher's call. The practical chapters will give you ideas for promoting your Sunday school and for facilitating staff discussions on the nuts and bolts of Sunday school administration.

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Chapter 1

Inspirational Devotions to Increase the Joy of Teaching

Being Enriched

For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge. (1 Corinthians 1:5)

Have you ever felt as though you needed to be renewed and enriched? Everybody does. The need to feel rested and recharged explains why vacations are so popular.

God wants his young believers to be spiritually enriched and renewed. You have been called to lead them to the source of true riches, Christ and the gospel of his forgiveness. God has chosen you to be his tool to help them grow in their faith and knowledge of God and in their ability to share God's truth with others.

Our text has good news for you. The apostle Paul tells you that you have been enriched in Christ. How? When you study God's Word, you are being "enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge." When you study your Sunday school lesson, you are being enriched so that you have riches to give away when you enter your classroom. Through your personal study, you review the fact that God will judge the sinner. You review the truth that Jesus took your sins upon himself; that is, he bore the punishment for your sins, taking your place on the cross. You review the fact of Jesus' resurrection from the dead and how his position as Lord over all creation assures you of his guidance and protection. You come away renewed and enriched. Now you can go about your work confidently, knowing that you have what it takes to carry out your work. Your teaching will benefit both you and your hearers.

Prayer

Enrich us as we study your Word and prepare to teach. Enable us to share the riches of your salvation with our children. We ask for these blessings in the name of our Lord. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. How does God enrich and renew you?
2. How is this a source of confidence for you when you enter your classroom?

Be Prepared

For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel. (Ezra 7:10)

People often ask us, “Are you prepared?” This is an important question because a lack of preparation can lose a game, bring disaster on an airline flight, or cause a company to lose money.

Pastors who are unprepared to deliver a sermon should not preach. Teachers who are unprepared to present a lesson should not teach. An unprepared teacher is wasting the time of the students who have come to learn more of God’s glorious truth. Because the time allotted for Sunday school is often brief, teachers need to be well prepared.

Our text today tells us that before Ezra taught God’s truth to Israel, he “devoted himself to the study . . . of the Law of the Lord.” Ezra’s devotion led him to take time to study the Word of God. Ezra wanted to know how the law should be applied to the lives of the people.

Dear teacher, do you set aside quality time to study God’s Word in order to be prepared? A teacher needs to do this. Most important, you should ask yourself how you can clearly teach the gospel message that Jesus died for all. Then, you should ask God to help you apply his Word to your students. Your preparation should also include some thought on how you can effectively use visual aids and other resources to get your message across.

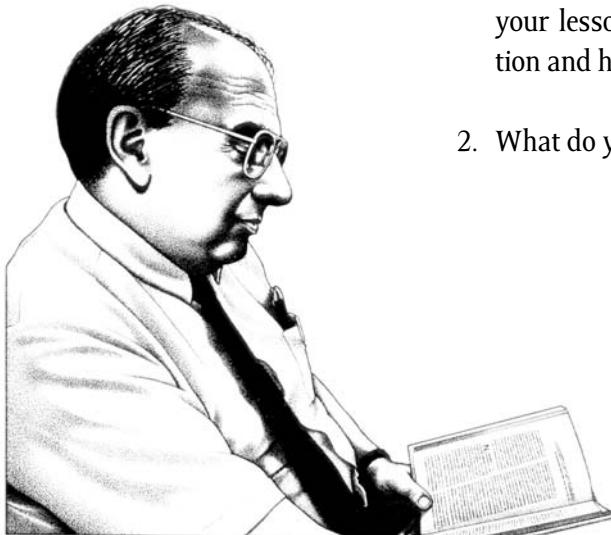
After you prepare, you are ready to teach your class. Ask God’s Holy Spirit to guide you and give you wisdom to teach the Word of Truth.

Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for recording examples of great men of faith. By your Holy Spirit, teach us to learn from them. As you led Ezra of old to study your Word before teaching it to the people, lead us to give ample time to preparation. Bless our work today and always. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Do you feel that you should take more time to prepare your lesson? Discuss your present method of preparation and how you could improve it.
2. What do you view as the real reason for your teaching?



Come and See

“Come,” he replied, “and you will see.” So they went and saw where he was staying, and spent that day with him. (John 1:39)

The word *come* is an evangelical word. It has a beautiful gospel sound to it. What a beautiful invitation Jesus extends to us when he says, “Come.” In another invitation to sinners he said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). The word *come* promises rest for our souls as well as comfort and help in life.

Is your Sunday school inviting children with the gospel invitation, “Come”? Does your school reverberate with the message, “Come and see”? Do your children see Jesus taught in every lesson? Is the message of Jesus’ life and death taught clearly? Do the children leave class with the peace of knowing that Jesus lived and died for them? Do they see Jesus modeled by you as you follow his example? Are you kind toward your students? Are you applying truths from God’s Word to the lives of your young listeners? Are you teaching willingly and putting forth your best effort? If you can say yes to these questions, you are echoing Jesus’ gospel invitation, “Come.” And you can go out into your community and invite children to “Come and see,” confident that in your Sunday school God’s message will come through loudly and clearly.

The last part of our verse says, “So they went and saw where he was staying.” Be thankful that Jesus wants us to know where he can be found! Thank Jesus for the children who come to your Sunday school and find him there.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for inviting us to “Come and see.” Your Word has told us about your love. You have reconciled us to God. You have revealed your name to us. Lead us to invite our children to come and see their Savior in our Sunday school. In your name we pray. Amen.

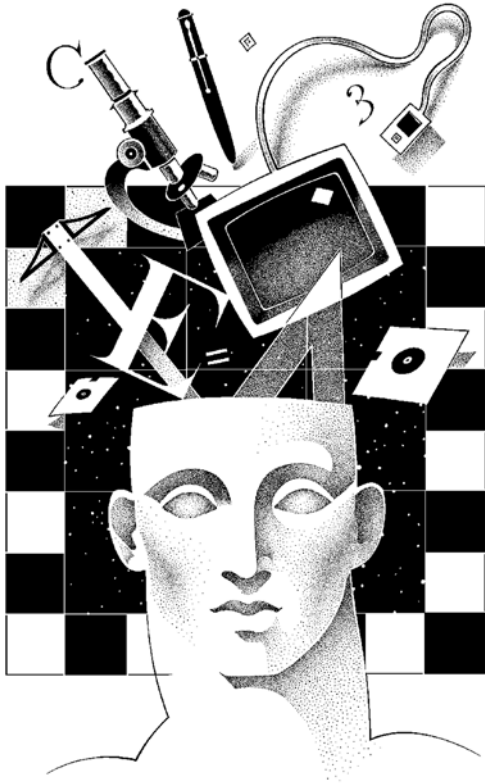
Teacher Talk

1. Tell about a time when one of your students asked a friend to “Come and see.”
2. Discuss this question: Does the message and example of your school inspire you to tell the community, “Come and see”?
3. What more can your church do to invite others to see Jesus at your Sunday school?



Continue Teaching God's Wisdom

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? (1 Corinthians 1:20)



To whom would most people give more honor and esteem: to an unbelieving scientist who has several degrees and is involved in the nation's space program, or to a faithful pastor in a small parish preaching the Word of God in its truth and purity? Most people would honor the scientist. To whom would people give more applause: to an actress or to a faithful, dedicated Sunday school teacher? The wise of this world would choose the actress.

Scholars and scientists may be held in high esteem by men, but if they reject God and the cross of Christ, they have become fools. Without God, their "wisdom" degenerates into evolutionary philosophy, New Age pantheism, atheism, and all kinds of evil and foolish practices.

It is sad that some Sunday school teachers think they must accommodate the Bible to the wisdom of the world. But God has warned us not to follow the wisdom of the world. The only reason for ever teaching about the world's wisdom is to show what's wrong with it.

As a teacher, you have a great responsibility and privilege to lead your students into the wisdom of God's Word. You have the distinct honor of showing them God's great

love through Jesus, the Savior of the world. A faithful teacher will never mix evil with good but will always teach the pure Word of God. Remain faithful, dear teacher, to the truths of the Bible.

Prayer

Dear God of all wisdom, thank you for giving us the truths of your Word as revealed in the Bible. Forgive us for placing too high a priority on human reason and philosophy. Guard our schools and churches from pagan philosophies that only discredit you, our Creator and Redeemer. Keep our teaching pure. Bless our work this day and always. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Why are teachers sometimes tempted to mix evolution and creation? How can they guard against this temptation?
2. Is it wrong to read and study the teachings of the great philosophers of the world? Where's the danger?
3. Do you appreciate the great responsibility you have as a teacher of the pure Word of God?

Christian Heroes

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. (Ephesians 6:10)

All of us like to read about heroes. We admire the accomplishments of great athletes, scientists, warriors, and explorers.

Not all of us are heroes as the world thinks of heroes. God does not expect us to be heroes in that sense. But Christians can be heroes too. Hebrews 11 lists many Christian heroes, for example, Abraham, Joseph, and Moses. These men were strong in the Lord and rested in his mighty power.

You personally know some heroes of faith. They do not receive awards like athletes do, nor do they bask in the admiration of the world. But they work in the strength of the Lord as Sunday school teachers, pastors, and superintendents. These heroes display a strong faith in Christ as their Savior, and they want to share that faith with the students they teach. They have courage to withstand Satan's attacks on their Christian life. They are determined to walk in the ways of the Lord.

Dear teacher, be thankful that you are a teacher of God's Word. Be happy that God has called you to do this important work. Continue in this work with joy, knowing that God will give you strength to teach his Word with power.

Heroes often receive awards, large sums of money, or medals. The world considers these to be signs of great success and achievement. Teachers usually do not receive any awards, medals, or money. But they are rewarded when they see their students standing firm in the faith. And they will receive recognition when God says to them, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:21).

Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for giving us many heroes of faith who serve as models for our lives. Thank you for your Son, Jesus—the hero who has won the greatest victory and is the best example for us to follow. Guide us in our work that we may be good examples to our students and their parents. As members of your kingdom, keep us humble, strong in the faith, and courageous. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Think of a time when one of your students displayed a heroic faith. Talk about the incident.
2. According to the Bible verse, who makes a person strong in faith?
3. Are you happy to be a teacher of God's Word? Share with each other what gives you joy in your work. What brings you grief?

Conquerors through Him

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:37)

“He never had an enemy in the world.” We may hear this said about a well-liked person. It seems that some people can go through life and never have an enemy.

This may be true in the physical sense, but it is not true in the spiritual sense. All of us have spiritual enemies.

We learn from God’s Word that the “unholy three” are busy at work trying to lead Christians away from God. The unholy three are the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh.

How do the unholy three affect a teacher? The devil is constantly at work tempting teachers to be unfaithful in their lesson preparation. He wants them to prepare carelessly and haphazardly. He wants them to place teaching at the bottom of their priority list. He even tempts them to find fault with the pastor or superintendent. Teachers must always be aware of these temptations and fight against them with the Word of God.

The sinful world is a teacher’s enemy too. It tells teachers to choose the routine of going out for breakfast or coffee on Sunday morning instead of teaching Sunday school. It pictures fishing, golfing, and sleeping in, for example, as a better use of time. The world’s attractions are very tempting, especially on Sunday morning.

The sinful flesh tempts teachers to give up teaching, get disgusted with the system, and walk around with gloomy faces. The sinful flesh also wants teachers to be disgusted with their inabilities and fall into despair.

Our text tells us that in all the difficulties we teachers face, we are more than conquerors through Christ. This means that God can reverse every temptation, every persecution, and every setback and use them as opportunities for us to become stronger in faith. All these difficulties can serve as opportunities for prayer and occasions for God to show us his miraculous and gracious deliverance. When the unholy three’s attack is the fiercest, we experience the greatest amount of God’s help and protection. We can take heart. We may have enemies, but every battle begun by Satan, the world, and our sinful flesh serves as an opportunity for us to win another victory in Christ.

Prayer

Dear Father in heaven, we know that you do not tempt us. Evil temptations come from the “unholy three.” By the power of your Spirit, help us to be conquerors through faith and prayer. Use us to show our students that they must depend on you alone when temptations come their way. We pray in the name of your Son, our Conqueror. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. What’s the best thing to do when one of the “unholy three” tempts you? Do you tell your students what to do when this happens to them?
2. Give an example of one great temptation that teachers face. Tell how Romans 8:37 can help in time of temptation.
3. What are some temptations your students face at school and at home? How can Sunday school teachers help their students resist these temptations?

Dig Deeply into the Word

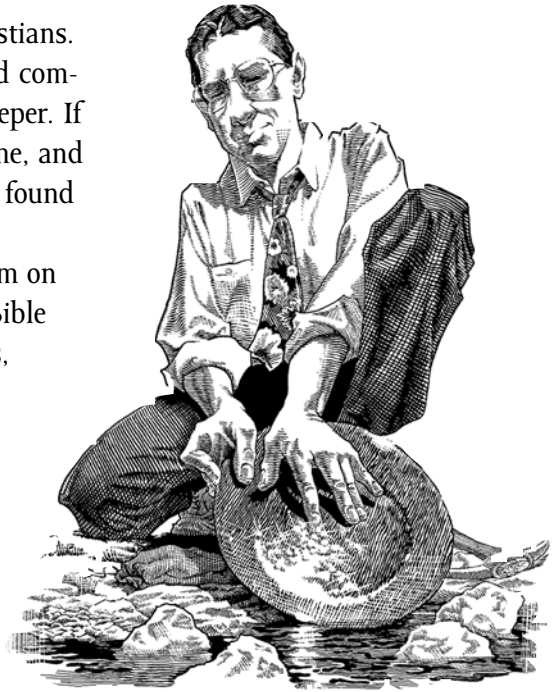
Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. (Colossians 3:16)

Too many Christians are satisfied with skimming over Bible readings without ever digging deeply into the “gold mine” of Scripture. Many Christians are satisfied with going to church and never attending a Bible class. And seldom do they search or dig deeply into the Scriptures during personal Bible study.

The story is told about a farmer in Colorado whose crops, year after year, were always in dire need of more water. After failing to find water in any of the many wells he drilled, he simply gave up and pulled out. Years later he revisited his farm and was surprised to see fields filled with lush, thriving produce. He told the new owner why he had left the farm. The owner replied that if he had drilled only a little deeper, he would have found an abundant supply of water.

Sad to say, this is what happens to many Christians. They could have had an abundant supply of help and comfort from God’s Word if they had only dug a little deeper. If they had attended Bible classes, read the Word at home, and discussed it with fellow Christians, they would have found more peace, joy, and security.

How about your students? Are you keeping them on too lean a diet? Do you balance your class time with Bible lessons, memory verses, question and answer times, and class sharing? Most important, do you use Bible lessons to lead your students to repent of their sin and rest in Jesus’ pardon? Thank God that you have been called to lead your class to dig deeply into the Bible. Great rewards are given to those who search the Scriptures.



Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for letting us study your Word and for all the blessings we and our students receive from it. Let us never be satisfied with a lean diet of your Word. Show us how to lead our students to dig deeply into the Bible and learn its great truths, especially the truth of our salvation. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

Discuss some techniques you use to involve your students in searching the Scriptures.

A Faithful Teacher

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. (1 Corinthians 4:2)

A church can be thankful for a faithful Sunday school teacher. A faithful teacher does more for a church than one can possibly imagine. What makes a faithful teacher?

Faithful teachers must balance the law and the gospel. A faithful teacher calls a sin a *sin* and warns about God's judgment. That's teaching the law. When a student repents, a faithful teacher forgives. That's proclaiming the gospel.

Faithful teachers must teach the true Word of God. A teacher who does not abide by the teachings of the Bible and of the Lutheran church is not a faithful teacher. Any teacher who secretly uses a curriculum other than the one decided upon by the church is certainly not being faithful to his or her call.

Faithful teachers are concerned about their students. When a child is repeatedly absent, a faithful teacher will try to determine if there is a special problem. It is important to keep close contact with the home. An occasional card or a phone call to parents shows that you care about the children.

Faithful teachers are good examples of the Christian way of life. They practice the words of a favorite hymn, "Let us ever walk with Jesus, / Follow his example pure."

Dear teacher, God has given you a great trust: his Word and a call to teach it to his people. Be confident that he will give you the power to carry out your commission faithfully.

Prayer

Dear Lord, You are the only true and faithful God. Forgive us for the times we have been unfaithful to you and to our work. Help us find joy in our work. Lead us to be Christ-like in our teaching, in our home life, and in our relationships with others. We ask your blessing on our work today. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Discuss times when it is difficult to be faithful to your work as a Sunday school teacher.
2. Think of two examples in the Bible of people who were unfaithful. What effect did their unfaithfulness have on their lives and on the lives of others around them?
3. Now think of two examples of people in the Bible who were faithful. What blessings did they experience, and how were they a blessing to others?

Finding the Lost

“And when he finds [the sheep], he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home.” (Luke 15:5)

A shepherd’s search for a lost sheep begins the moment he notices that it is lost. In Jesus’ day, a shepherd would carry on his search for the lost sheep with great care and urgency. He would continue his search until the lost lamb was found.

The verse following our text says that when the shepherd got home, he was so happy that he told his friends and neighbors to join with him in rejoicing over the lost sheep that was found.

Every one of Jesus’ sheep and lambs is precious to him. When one strays or is lost, Jesus is concerned. Our Good Shepherd wants that lost sheep or lamb back in the fold.

It is easy for teachers to overlook the students who stay away from Sunday school and to excuse themselves from any responsibility for bringing them back into the fold. Sunday school teachers should be concerned when one of the lambs strays from Sunday school. They should search for the lost child with great care and urgency. They might make a phone call or a personal visit to bring the lost lamb back into the fold. When teachers make such calls, they can take comfort in knowing that Jesus would do the same thing.

Dear teacher, ask the Holy Spirit to help you in your visits or calls. God promises to be with you. Rest assured that God is pleased with your work of teaching the Bible to his lambs. He wants every child to benefit from your teaching. When the child returns to class, Jesus and the angels in heaven rejoice.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for giving us the parable of the good shepherd. Teach us to be concerned about the lost child and to attempt to bring that child back into the fold. May we never miss an opportunity to bring a lost soul back to your care. Bless our efforts as teachers of your Word. Bless our work and study this day. In your name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Do each of us know which lambs are straying from our classes?
2. Does your Sunday school have a policy for calling on absentees? Do you think you need one?
3. How do you feel when a lost lamb has returned because of your efforts?



God's Special Servants

I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes. (Psalm 119:125)

David was Israel's most illustrious king, yet he boldly confessed that he was a servant of God. He considered this a position of honor and trust. In our text he confesses to God, "I am your servant."

Every Christian is a servant of God. Each one has been saved to serve, and each considers it a privilege to serve the Lord. In a very special way, Sunday school teachers and staff members are servants of God. They have been appointed to teach God's young Christians. Not everyone can teach children, nor is everyone willing to teach. Sunday school teaching is a special task and it takes a special servant to do it. It takes someone to whom God has given a willing heart. It takes someone who considers it an honor and a privilege to study God's Word and to share it with young Christians.

It is an honor to prepare to be a Sunday school teacher. Considering it to be an honor reflects David's attitude when he asks God to give him a discerning heart "that I may understand your statutes." Special servants of God need special training, and they are willing to take the necessary teacher-training courses to prepare themselves for this important work. They also consider Sunday school teachers meetings to be an important element in preparation.

Too many teachers think of teaching as a sacrifice. David Livingstone said, "People talk of the sacrifices I have made in spending so much of my life in Africa. Can that be called a sacrifice which is simply paid back as a small part of the great debt owing to our God which we can never repay? Is that a sacrifice which brings its own reward . . . Away with such a word, such a view, and such a thought! It is emphatically no sacrifice. Say rather it is a privilege!" (Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations* [Rockville, Maryland: Assurance Publishers, 1979], p. 1178).

Along with David, we have the privilege of being servants of God and people whom God will equip to teach his Word.

Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for making it possible for me to be one of your special servants. I don't deserve this privilege, but I do appreciate it. Forgive me for complaining about my work. Forgive me for being angry, discouraged, or a source of discouragement to others. Give me the joy of knowing that serving you is the most important thing I can do. Let me radiate with joy because of my special calling. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. A pastor once told his Sunday school staff, "What makes your work special is that you are teaching the Word of God." Do you agree? Why?
2. Special servants of God have unique responsibilities and duties. Discuss what you think these are. Then look at the Table of Duties in Luther's catechism.

The God We Serve

Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me. (Acts 27:23)

For two weeks the apostle Paul, along with the ship's crew and passengers, had been tossed about by the tempestuous winds of the Mediterranean Sea. They were so distressed and afraid that they didn't eat for days. Paul stood up and spoke words of comfort to the passengers and crew. He told them not to be afraid, but to be of good cheer because an angel of the Lord had spoken to him in a dream and had assured him that everyone on board would be spared. Then Paul shared with them the reason why they should believe this. The angel who appeared to him was sent by "the God whose I am and whom I serve." That was enough to settle their fears. The true God had spoken.

Paul's words can inspire Sunday school teachers too. First, think of how Paul describes his relationship to God: "the God whose I am." Through faith in the Lord Jesus you also belong to the family of God. You were made a member of his family through the working of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. What a comfort to know you belong to God. And remember, your students also belong to God. They were bought with the blood of the Lamb. Since we all belong to God, we are joint heirs of his blessings on this earth and in the life to come.

Second, note what Paul says in the second part of our text: "and whom I serve." We have been given the privilege of leading our children to know that they belong to God. Whenever you teach a class or conduct a teachers meeting and carry out your calling, you are serving the God to whom you belong. One of your goals as a teacher should be to show others how to serve the only true God.

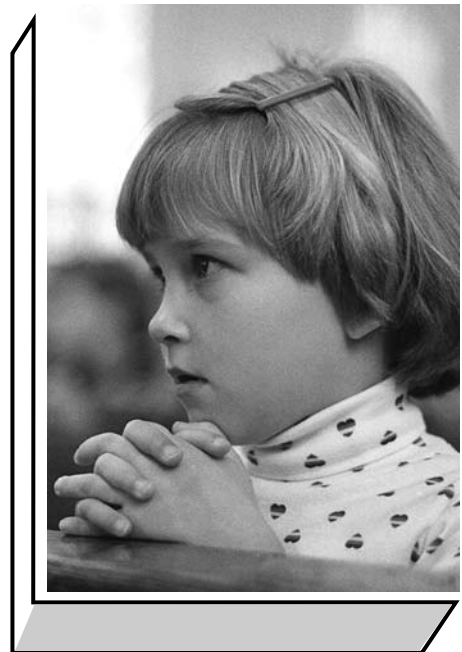
Take comfort, dear teacher, and remember these words when the storms of life and the frustrations of teaching come your way. You and your students belong to and serve *the God of heaven and earth*.

Prayer

Dear Father in heaven, thank you for bringing us into your family. Help us share this message with our students so they will never forget that they are members of your family too. Help us treat all of our students as members of God's family by showing them love, patience, and care even when it's difficult. Bless our meeting this day. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. What comfort and inspiration can teachers receive from the statement "the God whose I am"?
2. What comfort does this verse give you when you feel discouraged or when an angry parent wrongly attacks you?
3. Discuss this question: Is there a limit to how much you should serve God?



God Is with You in His Joy

*“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”
(John 15:11)*

A certain heathen religion teaches that heaven is a place where all our desires for pleasure will be satisfied. It teaches that there will be constant satisfaction from eating, drinking, making love, and enjoying wealth. To many people, having all these things is the epitome of joy. Human nature is attracted to this kind of joy and pleasure.

Is this what Jesus had in mind when he spoke of joy in our text? No. Jesus was speaking of a joy that surpasses human pleasure. The joy he has given us is constant communion with God. We have this communion because we are reconciled to God by the death of his Son. Jesus wants us to have that kind of joy. When we are in communion with God, praising him and praying to him, we experience true joy. This joy will be complete when we arrive in heaven.

Dear teacher, Jesus wants you to share this kind of joy with your students. Your students need to be shown that real joy comes from living close to God and knowing his great love in Christ. To enjoy life is not a sin. We certainly want to teach our students to have a happy outlook on life and to enjoy God’s wonderful creation. But if we do not teach them about the real joy of life with God, they may be lured away from Christ by earthly pleasures.

How do you teach your children about true joy? Teach God’s Word in all its truth and purity. Teach them about Jesus, their Savior. If you do this, the one joy that endures for all eternity will remain a part of your students’ lives.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for coming to this earth to bring joy in abundance. Help teachers and workers in your kingdom find joy in their work. Guide us by your Holy Spirit and enable us to bring joy to the students under our care by leading them into your Word. Enable us to show joy in our daily work. In your name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. What is the “joy” Jesus spoke about in our text?
2. Is it wrong for a child to enjoy a new bicycle or a new toy? What is the danger we must always be aware of?

Friends of God

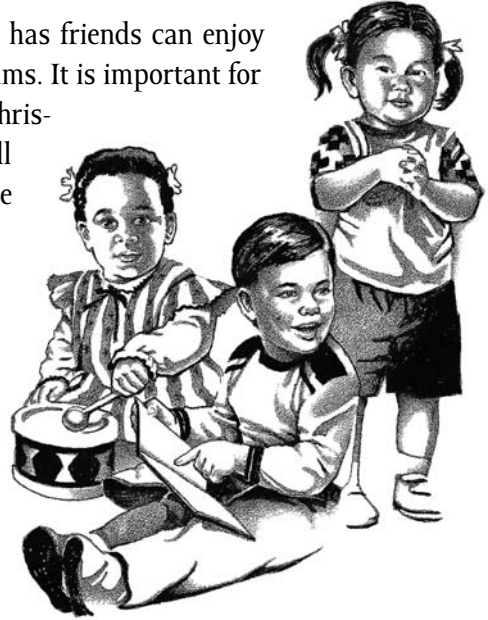
And the scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness," and he was called God's friend. (James 2:23)

A person without friends is to be pitied. Someone who has friends can enjoy activities more, can share joys and sorrows, problems and dreams. It is important for a Christian child to form friendships, especially with other Christians. King David said, "I am a friend to all who fear you, to all who follow your precepts" (Psalm 119:63). Children need to be taught the importance of this biblical principle.

Christian Sunday schools should be places where our students form friendships with other Christians, where people of the same faith can build and cement relationships. How about your Sunday school class? Does it provide an environment that is conducive to forming friendships? Do you seek to be a friend to your students? What can you do about the student who doesn't seem to have any friends?

As important as human friendship is, though, it is not the kind of friendship Sunday school teachers are most concerned about. They are most concerned about helping students know how to be friends with God. God wants teachers to lead their children into the Word where they can learn about God's great friendship with them in Christ. God became friends with your students when he sent his Son into the world to remove the barrier that stood between God and man—sin. The gospel message announces this friendship and calls all people to be friends of God.

Dear teacher, you have a vital role in helping our children to be friends with God. Tell them the gospel message. Let them know that when they sin, God forgives them; when they grow weary, God strengthens them; when they sorrow, he comforts them; and when they stumble, he raises them up. Don't ever underestimate the importance of your work.



Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for friends. We thank you for the greatest friend we could ever have, Jesus our Savior. Some of our students do not have friends. They feel left out and lonely. Through your Word and Spirit, help students and teachers to befriend the lonely children and to lead them to you, their greatest friend. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. How do our children become friends of God?
2. Do you have children in your room who are fearful and lonely? What can be done to help them?
3. How can you make a new student feel wanted and loved?

God's Word Will Accomplish What He Wants

So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:11)

What a promise God gives to pastors, teachers, superintendents, and other leaders in his church! God's Word will generate life in the hearts of those who hear it. All credit goes to God the Holy Spirit for any change that his Word works in the hearts and lives of the students we teach. We plant and then wait for God to give the increase. God's Word generates new life in the heart of the hearer because it has power. It has the power to save sinners by leading them to repentance and faith in the gospel of God's forgiveness. It has power to take an ungodly life and change it into a life spent serving God. It has power to bring comfort to a grieving heart and to replace grief with joy and hope. It has power to enable a student to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and in behavior that is God-pleasing.

Dear teacher and leader, God wants you to get the Word out. He promises to take care of the results. This does not mean that you can simply read the Scriptures in class in a monotonous voice and say, "Well, I did my job. Now God will take care of the rest." There is much more to teaching well. Jesus knew this too. He used parables. He repeated his words and patiently explained them. Teachers, too, should continue to use the best teaching methods and materials available. God's Word is such a precious message that it demands your best time, effort, and materials. God does expect faithfulness and diligence on your part.

Share God's Word with your students by using the best methods and materials your church can afford. Be faithful; continue to be diligent in your teaching and preparation. Then rest in the fact that God will bless your work and that his Word will accomplish what he wants for your students.

Prayer

Dear God of power, thank you for promising to prosper your Word. It is easy to become discouraged, but with a promise like the one we've heard today, we are encouraged to teach your Word with joy. Forgive us for allowing ourselves to become discouraged. Grant us joy and bless our work. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Have you ever seen God's Word take effect in someone's life as a result of something you taught that person years before? Share the incident.
2. Why might it be easy for us to place little importance on preparation after reading the promise from Isaiah? Why should this promise motivate us to prepare our lessons even more thoroughly?

Grow in Grace and Knowledge

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:18)

These words were spoken by Peter in his old age. Years before, Jesus had said to him, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” Peter answered very humbly, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you” (John 21:15). As he grew older, Peter came to know his Lord’s love more and more. Now, when his life was coming to an end, he urges all Christians to enjoy the same blessings. He encourages us to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

These words are especially true for teachers. Every teacher needs to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

First, the apostle Peter mentions the importance of growing in grace. The grace of God is his unmerited love and kindness. By definition, grace excludes any merit we might claim. The grace by which we are saved is God’s love and forgiveness alone. God’s grace was on display when Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world. The message of God’s grace needs to be taught more than anything else. Your students need to grow in understanding the profound meaning of God’s grace. Isn’t it a privilege that God has chosen you to help your students grow in the grace of God? On the last day, grace will be the only thing your students can cling to. Only by grace will they spend an eternity in heaven.

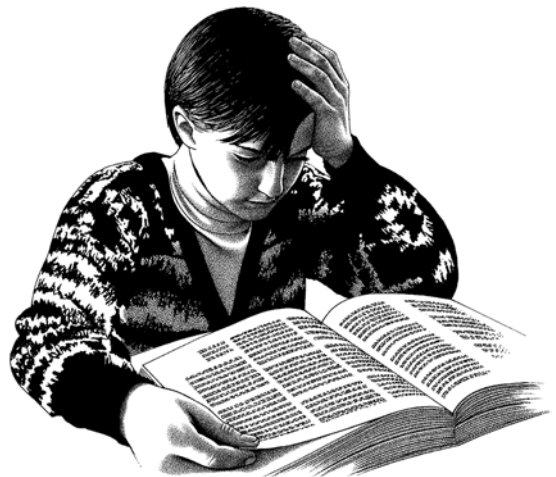
Second, Peter encourages us to grow in the knowledge of our Savior. To grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ means to know him better as a God of mercy and grace. Every Bible lesson in your course will help your students grow in the knowledge of their Lord. You do not want your students to have only a “nodding acquaintance” with Christ, but a real faith in the fact that Jesus is their Savior. What an incentive to prepare each lesson as well as you can. Every lesson is a doorway to God’s grace and to a deeper knowledge of his love.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for the gift of your love and grace. We confess our faults and shortcomings but rejoice in the grace you have given us through Jesus, our Savior. Bless our teaching of your Word and use it to bring many to a saving faith in your Son. Bless our work as we lead our students to become more Christ-like. Bless our families. May all grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord through regular Bible study and church attendance. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Should a Sunday school teachers meeting have Bible study, or should it be used only for school business? Why?
2. What should be given the highest priority in your Sunday school lessons?
3. Why does more Bible study bring you closer to Jesus?



Heirs of God

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. (Romans 8:17)

Parents do not indiscriminately choose an heir. They do not want to will their property to strangers, much less to enemies. Parents usually will their property to their children; they are the rightful heirs. After all, children have lived with, helped, and perhaps even suffered with their parents.

This is also true of God. He does not carelessly bestow the title of “heir” on just anyone. This title of honor is given only to those who are his children. Our text tells us that if we are children of God, then we are also heirs of God. What makes us children of God? The Bible tells us in John 1:12, “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” Believers alone are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.

Dear teacher, you must always remember what makes your work so important. You are dealing with “heirs of God,” for that is what the children in your class are. This title was not given to them indiscriminately. It was given to them at their baptism when God led them to faith and adopted them into his family. As heirs of God, all Christians will receive an inheritance the likes of which this world has never known, eternal life in heaven. It is very important that you nurture and care for the faith the Lord created in the hearts of your children through baptism. Never doubt the value of teaching God’s Word. Make sure that each lesson contains the beautiful gospel message of Jesus’ forgiveness.

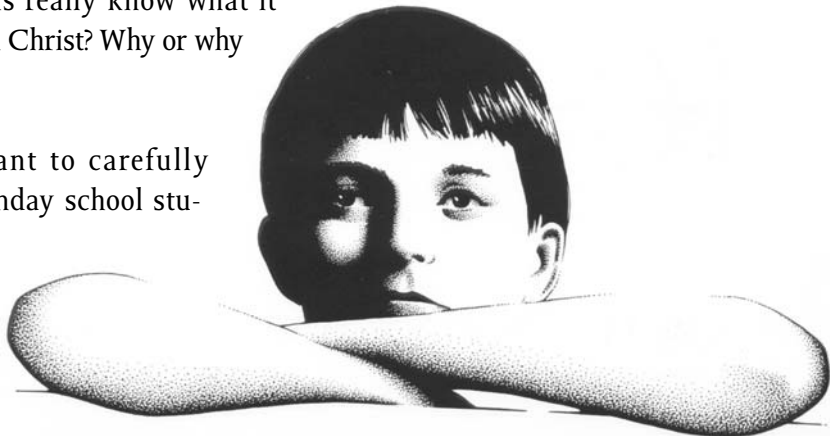
What great joy will be ours when God calls us home and says, “Well done, good and faithful servant! . . . Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matthew 25:21). In heaven all of God’s heirs will enjoy unending happiness and bliss.

Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for naming us heirs. Thank you for the inheritance that awaits all of us. You have given a gift beyond compare. Give us joy as we work with the young heirs whom you have entrusted to our care. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Why do Christians value being heirs of God?
2. Do most Christians really know what it means to suffer with Christ? Why or why not?
3. Why is it important to carefully explain to your Sunday school students the concept of being an heir?



How to Remain Effective

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-8)

No one wants to be ineffective and unproductive, especially pastors and teachers. All of you consider the work of bringing God's message of love to children very important. When you accepted your position, you did so with the prayer that you would be effective in teaching the Word of God. However, at times you might feel ineffective. Our text contains good news for you when you feel that way.

All of us were brought to faith in Jesus either through baptism or later in life. That faith needs to grow and be nurtured. Part of this growth involves adding some qualities to our faith. As we list them, note how they help a teacher remain effective.

Paul tells us to add *goodness*. Be good and kind to the children in your class. They will reflect your goodness in the way they treat others.

To *goodness* we are to add *knowledge*. This means we must grow in understanding the Word of God. Set aside regular times for reading and studying the Bible. Attend the Bible studies. Use Sunday school preparation time to advance your own knowledge of God's Word.

Self-control is the next quality to add. As a teacher, you practice self-control when you handle upsetting situations in a kind and understanding manner.

Add *perseverance*. Do not give up when the going gets tough. Hang in there, and when the trial is over, you will come out of it a stronger Christian.

Godliness means to live as God wants us to live. Always be an example of the Christian way of life.

Brotherly kindness and *love* are intertwined and work together. God sent Jesus to be your Savior. Reflect the kindness God has shown to you, and when you deal with your students, remember that they are brothers and sisters in Christ.

Grow in faith, and grow in these qualities. If you do, you will be an effective teacher. Your children will grow in knowing all that Christ did for them, and they will be encouraged by your example.

Prayer

Dear Father, forgive us for the times we have been ineffective teachers. During times of discouragement and distress, guide us by your Spirit and comfort us with your Word. Help us to practice each of the qualities mentioned in our Bible reading. Give us skill to teach these qualities to our students. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Pick one of the qualities mentioned by Peter and tell how it flows from faith in Jesus' work for us.
2. At the present time, which quality needs to be emphasized the most in your class?

Is It Really True?

Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens. (Psalm 119:89)

There were people in the Bible who doubted God's Word. Remember Zechariah the priest? He asked the angel Gabriel for a sign that God's promise would come true. The Pharisees even challenged the Lord Jesus, God's Son, to show them a sign. On several occasions the disciples were filled with doubt.

Today people question everything. Every idea must be scientifically proven before people will accept its validity.

Do you find your students questioning the Word of God? Perhaps someone in your class has questioned the creation account or wondered if Jesus really performed miracles. How should you handle this problem? First, acknowledge that you understand the problem the student is having. Second, let the Holy Spirit work. Stand firm on what the Bible says.

Be thankful that you are teaching a message that is certain. Whatever God says is true. God's Word is as sure as God himself. What a privilege you have to assure your students that they can place all their trust in the promises of God. What a privilege you have to tell them that God's Word is eternal and that it stands firm in the heavens.

What a joy it is to share with your students the precious gospel promise of salvation, the forgiveness of sins, and the hope of eternal life.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for your sure word of promise, especially the promise of forgiveness through Jesus' death and resurrection. Give us the certainty that all the promises in the Bible are true. As we teach the glorious truths in the Bible, bring our students and their families to that same conviction. Bless our work this day and always. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. What forces today cause people to question the truth of God's Word?
2. What do you do when your students question the Bible's truth? Is it ever the case that they are just asking for more information?

Disciples of Christ

“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.” (John 8:31)

Sometimes people have the false idea that they learned everything they need to know about the Bible when they were young. Some like to boast about the many Bible verses they learned as children. It is important to learn God’s Word and memorize Bible verses as children. But it is wrong to think that what we learned about God’s Word as children is enough. The need to continue learning applies in other areas of our lives. For example, in order to keep our jobs, we must learn new skills.

In our text Jesus makes it clear that we should continue to study his Word. The word *disciple* comes from the Latin word meaning “follower.” A follower continues to *learn* from the one he is following. To follow Jesus means to continue to learn from him. As educational leaders, we must remind ourselves that we need to study God’s Word. We sin daily and need to hear the message of God’s forgiveness. We need to apply God’s Word to the new situations we experience as adults. Many concepts in the Bible are beyond the understanding of children and can be learned only as adults. Jesus, the teacher of children and adults, knew all these things. That’s why he reminded us to continue in his Word.

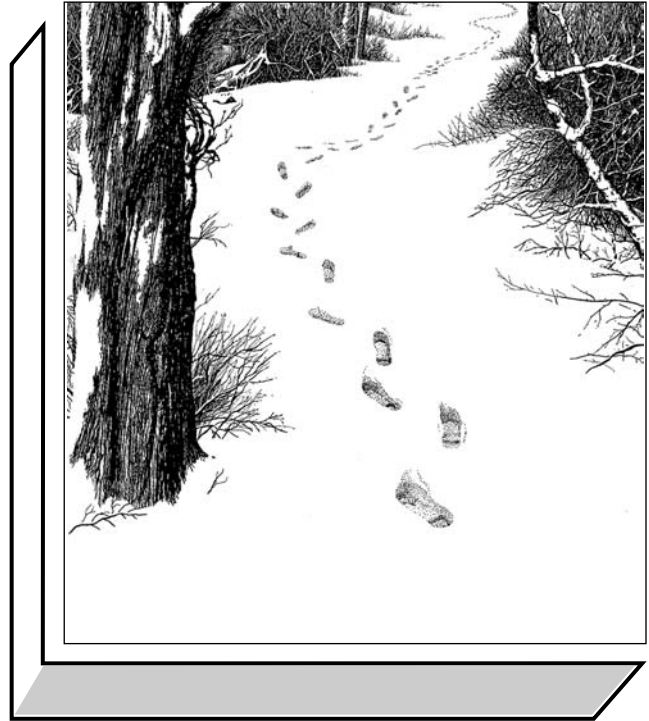
We constantly need to remember that we are not just “church members,” but people who are to learn and hold tightly to all of Jesus’ teachings.

Prayer

Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for giving us the privilege of being your disciples. What a blessed experience to learn from you! Forgive us for taking shortcuts in our study of your Word. Bless our work as teachers and pastors of your Word. Lead our students to the truths that assure them of eternal life. In your name we pray. Amen.

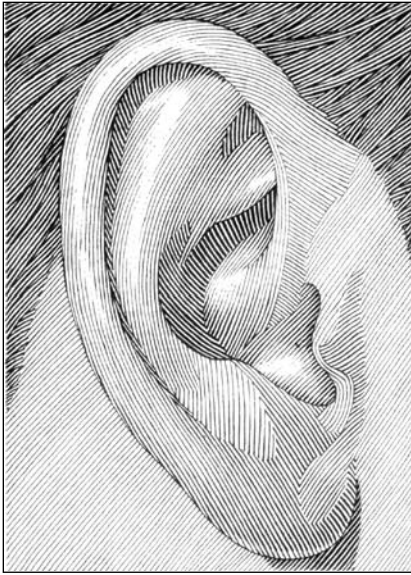
Teacher Talk

1. Do you know adults who feel they don’t ever have to attend Bible study again? How can you help them get over this false assumption?
2. Talk about ways your church can help you grow in your knowledge of God’s Word.



Listen

“He who has ears, let him hear.” (Matthew 13:9)



The word *listen* is one of the words teachers use most often. Sunday school teachers want their students to listen while they explain God’s Word. The master teacher, Jesus, often used this word. Many times he began telling parables by saying, “Listen.” Jesus knew that if the Word was to sink into people’s hearts and grow, people had to listen to it.

Do you insist that your students listen while the Bible is being explained? Refusing to listen is a spiritual problem. The Word can be near our pupils, but if they are preoccupied with other thoughts, they will not hear it. And if they do not hear, they will not learn. On the other hand, some listen but do not intend to believe or practice what God’s message teaches. In either case, if our students do not listen to God’s promises, instruction, and counsel, they are putting their faith in jeopardy. If refusal to listen continues, it will lead to eternal death.

Dear teacher and leader, God’s Word is so important that it dare not be ignored. God promises to bless his Word, but if children refuse to listen, God’s blessings will be lost to them.

As teachers, it is your duty and responsibility to encourage all your students to listen to the gospel of God’s forgiveness. Ask for your students’ attention, confident that when you say “Listen,” you are using the same command that Jesus used. Be assured that when you say, “Let’s now listen to our Bible lesson for today,” and teach the lesson, you have God’s Holy Spirit working in your students’ hearts leading them to eternal life.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, we thank and praise your holy name. We thank you for all the spiritual and temporal blessings that you so freely give to your people. As teachers, we want to listen to your Word so we can better do the work you’ve called us to do. Use us to teach our students to listen to your Word so that they may grow in grace, love, and holiness. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Are all of your class members good listeners? How can you help those who haven’t learned to listen?
2. Why is refusing to listen a spiritual problem?

The Majesty of God

Praise the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, you are very great; you are clothed with splendor and majesty. (Psalm 104:1)

In Psalm 104 the psalmist leads us in a special song of praise to the Lord who created us and cares for us. The psalmist declares that our Creator is truly majestic. The dictionary defines majesty as “sovereign authority.” That definition certainly fits the King of creation. The rest of the psalm tells us that God’s creation is diverse and his wisdom is beyond human understanding. God is great and his majesty is astounding.

Dear teacher and leader, we need to teach our students about the majesty of God. They need to know that God is the Creator of all that exists. You need to show them that creation puts the majestic glory of God on display. You need to show them that true science unfolds the wonders and design of creation. God as Creator is only one facet of his majesty. There is more.

What a joy it is to teach your class about the majesty and glory of God’s unending love. Human love may end, but God’s love never ends. His love is beyond human comprehension. He demonstrated that when he sent his Son to be our Savior. Children need to know God as someone who loves them and not as someone to be afraid of.

Dear teacher, teach your students to appreciate psalms like Psalm 104. Don’t just read it, or parts of it, without commenting on God’s greatness. Read Job 40 and 41. These chapters are forceful descriptions of God’s majesty. Teach the Word of God with dignity, respect, and joy; and your students will soon realize the greatness of God. They will realize that he alone is worthy of praise. Your students will then realize that the dangers of this life may be great, but the majesty of our God is infinitely greater.

Above all, teach your students about the Lord who sent his Son to redeem them from the power of sin, death, and the devil. Teach them how he conquered evil and set up a kingdom of grace for them to dwell in. For the student who believes this, the glory of God’s power is a comforting thing.

Prayer

O Lord God, you are very great. We thank you for your beautiful and spectacular creation. We thank you for life itself and for the fact that we can serve others for the welfare of their precious souls. Your world is majestic, but the salvation you have given us in Christ is even more valuable. Give us your Spirit that we may teach our students about the wonders of creation and the joy of salvation. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

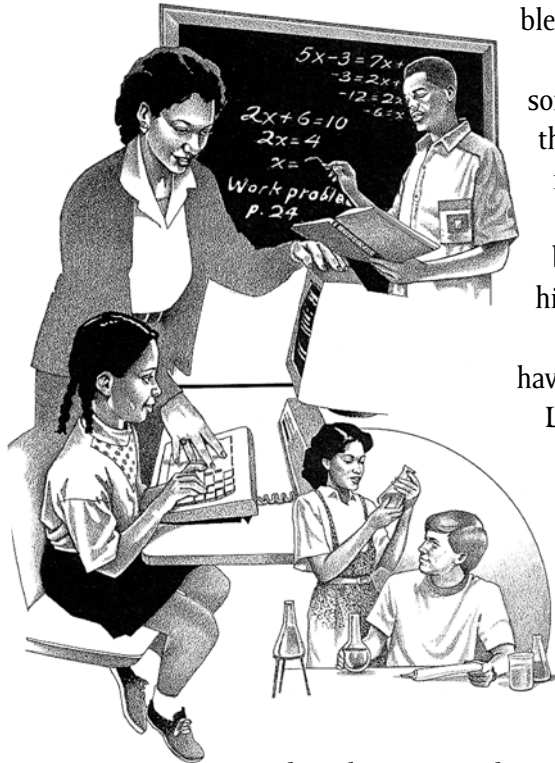
Teacher Talk

1. Even though our earth is polluted with violence and sin, why can we still call God’s creation majestic?
2. How can you help children appreciate the majesty of God’s creation?
3. What comfort is there in knowing that God is greater than any earthly power?

Prosperous Teachers

He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. (Psalm 1:3)

The word *prosper* is sometimes used as a synonym for “achieving success.” In our day, achieving success usually means acquiring wealth or a position of power and honor. In our text, however, the word *prosper* does not refer to worldly success. The psalmist says a prosperous person is one who serves the purpose for which he was created, and he is one whom God blesses in a variety of ways.



In our world some people serve themselves, and some people serve God and their fellow human beings. By the power of God’s Holy Spirit, you have been changed into one of the latter. Through faith in your Savior, Jesus, you have been forgiven and redeemed. Because you have been redeemed and sanctified by God, you want to serve him out of love for what he has done for you.

What a wonderful way you, a Sunday school teacher, have to serve your Lord. You have the opportunity to serve the Lord by fulfilling his command, “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). You serve the Lord by leading his children in the paths of repentance and faith. You serve him by leading his children to know their Savior who has forgiven their sins and promised them the joys of heaven. You serve him by helping his lambs along the path of a sanctified life. Be thankful that God has chosen you to teach his lambs and that he promises to prosper the work you

do in his name. What a privilege it is to serve the students in your class! You are truly prosperous!

Prayer

Dear heavenly Father, you alone can prosper our work. On many days we feel that our work as teachers is not very important. Teach us to know that teaching your Word to the students entrusted to our care is indeed the most important work we can do. Help us to willingly serve you by teaching others your Word. Doing this, we will bring true prosperity into their lives and at the same time find true prosperity in ours. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Why are teachers tempted to think their work is unimportant?
2. Discuss what you think makes a person prosperous.
3. Name some Bible people who were prosperous.

Remember Whom You Serve

For this we labor and strive, that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe. (1 Timothy 4:10)

Dear teacher, our text should take all selfishness, drudgery, and unhappiness from your teaching. How? By reminding you for whom you work. You are working for the “living God, who is the Savior of all men.” The apostle Paul says that because of this, he is willing to “labor and strive.” For Paul, this often included suffering. Sometimes it does for you too. Maybe a parent has just finished giving you a tongue-lashing. Perhaps you have been completely misunderstood. If this has happened to you, read these words again and remember for whom you work. Then the reproach we suffer is easier to bear.

Think about what Jesus did to redeem us. He suffered the awful torment of the cross. He suffered willingly because he wanted to fulfill the work his Father had sent him to do. Jesus also looked ahead and anticipated the joy that would follow his cross. Salvation would be complete and all believers would share in his glorious resurrection.

Do you tire of your teaching? If so, remember that you are working for the living God. And be motivated by the result of your teaching: your students knowing Jesus as their Savior and believing in him. Anticipate the joy of seeing a small change in the behavior of your pupils. Look forward to seeing them in heaven.

Do your work with joy and a willing spirit. Remember that you are working for the Lord, who is the Savior of all. This truth gives meaning and satisfaction to your labors.

Prayer

What a privilege to work for you, dear Lord! Too often we do not appreciate this great honor. Please forgive us for not always remembering that you are the one for whom we work. As we teach, remind us that our work for you is never in vain. Bless the lives of our students and family members. Keep them in faith and enable them to grow in sanctified living. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Does the concept of working for God bring greater joy to the life of a church worker? Discuss why.
2. Share some examples of how you have been misunderstood or treated unfairly. What comfort can our text bring at times like that?
3. Share with each other some of the joys you derive from being teachers.

We Would Like to See Jesus

“Sir, . . . we would like to see Jesus.” (John 12:21)

On Palm Sunday Jesus entered Jerusalem as a king. Certain Greeks who had come to worship in the temple were there too. They came to Philip with the request, “Sir, we would like to see Jesus.” What a beautiful request.

I believe this short verse is so important that teachers should say these words each Sunday before beginning to teach their class. In one church these words are engraved on a plaque placed on the pulpit. What a great reminder for the pastor! Before he preaches the sermon, the pastor is reminded that the people have assembled to hear Jesus.



the sermon, the pastor is reminded that the people have assembled to hear Jesus.

Your students also have a right to see Jesus in your classes. The lessons you teach must always bring your students to Jesus. It is easy to spend too much time in class talking about topics other than the Word of God. It is easy to discuss what pops into the students' minds and not to spend much time on Bible study. A teacher must remember that all the students have the right to hear and study the Word that leads them to Jesus. They have the right to expect to see Jesus in every lesson.

Students also need to see Jesus through your example. Allow them to see how Jesus would act by the way you treat them.

It is through Jesus alone that your students experience true joy and satisfaction. Lead them to the water of life and give them a model of Christ to follow.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for giving us your Word and allowing us to teach its great message to the students entrusted to our care. Bless our teaching that it may open our students' eyes to see more of you. Bless our teaching that we may be good examples of the way a Christian should live. Bless our work that it may indeed be said of us, “Yes, I did see Jesus in this teacher's class and life.” In your name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. How does a teacher lead a student to see Jesus?
2. Do your children sometimes get you “off the track”? Give suggestions for getting back on track. Give some examples of how to turn a student's irrelevant question into an opportunity to teach God's Word.

Teachers Who Proclaim Christ

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. (Colossians 1:28)

Remember whom you are to proclaim to your students. He is not just another great and famous person. He is the Christ, God's Son, the Creator of the universe, the head of the church, the beginning and the end. He is the Promised One who took away the sins of the world. He is the one who suffered an excruciating death and who rose from the grave. He is the Savior of the world. Yes, he is your students' Savior.

Our text tells us that we are to teach our students about this Christ. Does God want us to use our class time to speak about good values and financial success? No. But, sad to say, many teachers do. They use Bible-study time to elevate man and to glorify the benefits of positive thinking rather than to glorify and proclaim Christ. Or, they use their time to exalt the accomplishments of science and medicine rather than to exalt God.

Our Bible verse is clear. You are to teach "with all wisdom." Where do we begin? The Bible tells us that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Teach wisdom by proclaiming Christ. Always teach repentance and faith in him alone. If you do this, you will be able to present your students to God perfect in Christ. They will be perfect in knowing Jesus as their Savior from sin, and they will be able to stand before God, holy and free from sin. By teaching Christ as their foundation, you will be able to lead your students to dedicate their lives to serving their Lord.

What a joy to know that you are teaching your students "with all wisdom." What a joy to know that your students know Christ and his redeeming love. What a joy to know that you contribute to bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Prayer

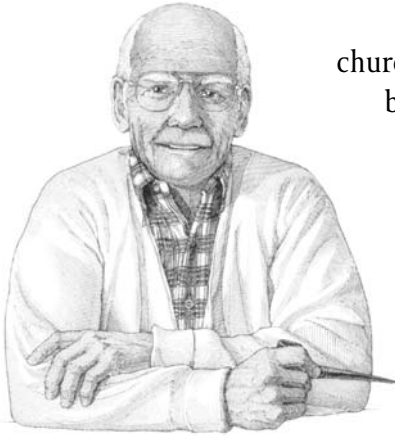
Dear Lord God, thank you for calling us to teach the children of your church. Keep us humble, and by your Holy Spirit lead us always to proclaim Christ in our work and life. Give us wisdom to teach wisely. Help us to admonish when necessary and to guide when needed. Help us seize the opportunities you give us to help those who have special needs. Continue to bless our work so that all our students may one day reside in your heavenly home. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. According to Colossians 1:28, what should be the goal of your teaching?
2. What is the best way to proclaim Christ to your students?
3. Is it wrong to discuss sports, music, news, and social issues during the Bible hour? Explain.

Unknown but Well Known

Known, yet regarded as unknown. (2 Corinthians 6:9)



A retired gentleman spent two mornings a week working in the church library. Carefully, diligently, and meticulously he reshelfed books, cataloged new books, and did whatever he could to make the library a place the church members could be proud of. He did his work well, but for the most part it went unnoticed.

One day the Lord called him home. Only the pastor, the organist, and a few friends and relatives attended his funeral. The pastor chose 2 Corinthians 6:9 as his funeral text, “known, yet regarded as unknown.” It was a very appropriate text because few noticed how this man had served his Lord. He was not well known in his congregation, but as the pastor pointed out in his sermon, he was well known to someone, his Lord and Savior. He was well known to Christ, who had redeemed him and made him a member of his family.

Dear teacher, do you sometimes feel unknown as a Sunday school teacher? Sunday after Sunday you go about your God-given task of bringing the message of God’s love to your students, yet you are not given special recognition. Parents do not stop by and thank you for the fine work you are doing as their child’s teacher. Perhaps even the pastor forgets to say something about your work, or the superintendent takes you for granted.

Take heart. God was well aware of the older gentleman’s service of faith; he is also watching out for you and observing the fruit that comes from your faith. You are well known to God, and that is what matters. Jesus died for your sins and came to save you from hell and damnation. You are well known to God because he has called you into his family. He knows you as a future inhabitant of heaven. He knows that you are serving him by fulfilling his command to “teach them to obey everything I have commanded you.” You can be certain that God never overlooks your service to him.

Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for never forgetting us. You see even the unimportant things we do for you even though others do not always recognize their value. Let us never think that our work of teaching is unimportant. Bless our work as your servants, and bless the students under our care. In your name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Do you know someone like the retired gentleman described in the devotion? Why does that person continue working for the church without receiving special recognition?
2. Is it easy for teachers to become discouraged if they do not receive enough recognition? How do the words of our text help us keep on serving the Lord with a willing spirit?

Who? Me, Lord?

But Moses said to God, “Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” (Exodus 3:11)

People, unfortunately, often find it easy to excuse themselves from serving God. They are reluctant to carry out the assignment God has given them. Moses is a prime example of that. God called Moses to deliver his people from bondage in Egypt. But instead of saying, “Here am I; send me,” he offered God one excuse after another. He pleaded, “I am not an eloquent speaker; the people will wonder who sent me; Pharaoh will not listen to me.”

God was not pleased with Moses’ excuses, and his anger burned against Moses. God was ready to act, but Moses was reluctant. God had prepared him for the special task of leading his people out of Egypt. Yet Moses was ready to excuse himself and ignore God’s gifts and his call.

God still equips Christians for the work he has called them to do. God equips you through the Word and the sacraments. He uses your pastor, the superintendent, and other teachers to prepare you to teach. He provides you with training and encouragement to teach his Word to his lambs.

Although God has equipped you for the work of teaching, you may be tempted to offer the Lord various excuses for quitting. You may ask, “Who? Me, Lord? Do you really need me? Can’t someone else do the work?”

One favorite excuse frequently offered today is, “I’m burned out.” But can anyone truly get burned out teaching God’s Word to children? Teachers who give this excuse may simply mean that they have come to the point where they need new ideas or some fresh approach. On the other hand, their words may reveal that what they really need is to spend more time in prayer and preparation. True, teachers should take a rest. But after resting, they should renew their effort, relying on God’s power to provide the strength and patience they need.

When God calls you to serve, you can be sure that he will equip you as he equipped Moses. He will give you all you need to be a good teacher.

Prayer

Dear heavenly Father, we thank you for the privilege of being teachers in your kingdom. Let us never minimize the honor that you bestow upon those who teach and preach the Word. Forgive us for offering excuses when the going gets rough. At those times, give us a full measure of your Holy Spirit so that we may continue teaching and preaching your Word with power. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Can burnout be a real problem, or is it merely an excuse?
2. What can help a teacher who feels burned out?
3. Your congregation has given you a call to teach. What confidence does that give you?

Working Together

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel. (Philippians 1:27)



Sometimes we are amazed at how a certain passage of Scripture speaks to the needs, problems, and concerns of today's church. This particular passage from Paul's letter to the Philippians encourages and admonishes congregations (or Sunday schools) that need more harmony, love, caring, and unity.

Think about the situation in your Sunday school. Is there disunity among your staff? Is there a lack of concern for fellow workers or for the students? If so, take to heart what God is telling you in these words.

Our text tells you to "stand firm" in one spirit. How can you do this? First recognize your sins and the great forgiveness God has given you. Then remember that you and your students are one in spirit with many people throughout the world who share in the hope of the gospel. This leads to unity of purpose and concern for fellow workers and students. You and your fellow teachers are working toward the same goal: to proclaim Jesus Christ to others. You are driven by the same motivation: the love of Christ. That's what Paul means when he encourages you to "contend as one man for the faith of the gospel." Those who share a common faith and are joined together by the hope of eternal life will work together to bring the good news of the gospel to others.

As teachers in a Christian Sunday school, God is using you to firmly implant faith in Jesus in the minds of your children. He promises to send his Holy Spirit to bless your work. What a wonderful calling Sunday school teachers have! What a blessing to be an instrument of God in sharing his message of love. May he continue to bless your staff with unity, love, and mutual concern.

Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for the admonition you have given us in the words of our text. Forgive us for not always standing firm in one spirit. Forgive any envy, lovelessness, or lack of concern we have shown to our fellow workers or students. By the power of your Holy Spirit, increase the unity of our staff. Bless the work you have brought us together to do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Can you think of anything that would improve staff morale?
2. How does the study of God's Word bring unity to a teaching staff?

God's Word Is Always True

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

God always speaks the truth. Very few people, if any, would charge God with lying. Yet some people forget that the Bible is God's Word. They feel free to discredit the Bible and claim that it contains contradictions and untruths.

Now, there may be difficulties in the Bible, but there are no contradictions or untruths. For example, the mystery of the Trinity is difficult for our human minds to understand, but we have no reason to doubt how God describes himself. The Bible may seem to contradict some of the findings of science, but remember, our God is the Creator of all things. His description of how he created the world is as true as any other part of Scripture. Our text is clear when it says, “your word is truth.”

What's more, if some parts of the Bible are false, we can never be certain which parts are true. What a horrible thought it would be to think that God is lying to us when he says that Jesus took away our sins. But how comforting it is to know that the Bible is completely true, so that when it says that Jesus is our Savior, we can be sure of it. God's promises are the one thing you can be sure of in life.

Dear teacher and Sunday school leader, you are charged with teaching your children the truth of God's Word. Teach that Word with conviction. It is the truth. Resolve to grow in your knowledge of the truth so that you do not teach your children false doctrine even inadvertently. Resolve never to cheat them by withholding from them the truth of the law and the gospel. Be confident as you teach the truths of God's Word to your class; you know that what you are teaching is true. Every Sunday, tell your students the greatest truth of all—Jesus is their loving Savior.

Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for the truth of your Word. We are thankful that we can always depend on your promises given to us in the Bible. Thank you for the greatest truth of all, that Jesus is our Savior. Bless our teaching. Use us to spread your Word and accomplish your purpose. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

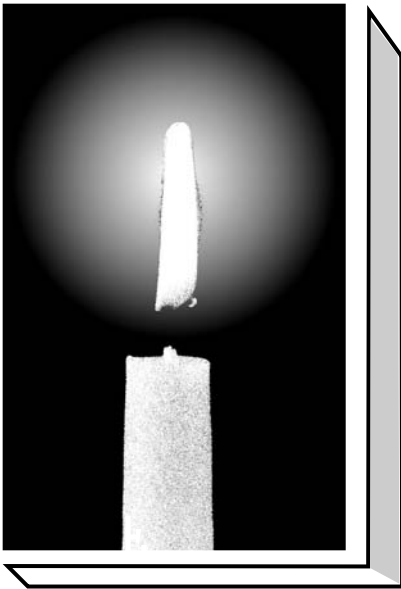
Teacher Talk

1. How should we teach difficult Bible doctrines and concepts?
2. What are some Bible teachings we must admit we don't fully understand? How can our way of handling these difficulties reflect what we know about the truth of the Bible? (A good book to read and to have in the church library is *Bible Difficulties and Seeming Contradictions* by William Arndt, available from Northwestern Publishing House.)
3. How do you deal with the student who says, “I don't believe there are angels because I can't see any”?

You Have the Light

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. (Psalm 119:105)

One year our family visited Lehman Caves in Great Basin National Park near Baker, Nevada. The cavern is lined with gray and white marble. Inside the earth we explored tunnels decorated with stalactites and stalagmites. One feature of the tour particularly impressed us. At one point the park ranger turned off all the lights. For a few brief moments we experienced what it is like to exist in total darkness. When the lights came back on, the whole group breathed a collective sigh of relief. What a wonderful feeling to be back in the light.



Our text, taken from Psalms, compares God's Word to a light. Think of those people who do not know Jesus as their Savior. They, like the tourists in the cave, are living in total darkness. But unlike the temporary darkness the tourists in the cave experienced, their darkness is lifelong. Lost in darkness, they do not even know they need the light of God's forgiveness; but when God finally leads them into the light, what a sigh of relief they breathe. God's Word is the light that brings people to that light of faith.

Natural light illuminates the path a person is walking on. God's Word shows us the path to heaven and focuses our eyes on our Savior, who loved us and died for us. It also enlightens the spiritual path on which we walk here in this life. It warns of places where we might stumble. It shows us that Satan is the source of evil desires. It shows us how to avoid and overcome those evil desires. It shows us where to go when we have fallen into temptation.

Dear teacher, you have the light. You have been called to teach God's Word to the students entrusted to your care. You have accepted the position of Sunday school teacher because you do not want children to walk in darkness. You want to turn on God's light in their lives. You desire to show them the way to heaven, and you teach them how to serve the Lord. To do this you will want to teach God's Word faithfully. There is no work more important than this. God is pleased with your service. Continue to shine the light of God's Word!

Prayer

Dear Jesus, you are the true Light of the world. We are thankful that we know you and can walk in your light. Bless our work. Enable us to show our students how to walk in the light and how to believe in you, dear Jesus, as their Savior. Give us a healthy attitude toward our work. Help us consider it a privilege to lead others into the light of your Word. In your name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Can you think of another verse from the Bible that refers to God's Word, or the Lord Jesus, as light?
2. Explain the phrase "enlightened by the gospel."

You Are a Trainer

*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.
(Proverbs 22:6)*

In the United States, education has been given a high priority. Children are given the opportunity to receive an education that prepares them for life. To achieve this goal, educators spend huge sums of money each year for the best and latest equipment.

Although it is a universally accepted fact that education is necessary, not all are agreed on the kind of education that is most important. Most schools, for example, emphasize the importance of learning the kinds of skills that will help students find jobs and lead successful lives. For that reason, courses in mathematics, writing, computer operation, engineering, and science are all very high on their list of required classes. Following such a course of study may produce skilled workers, but there is no guarantee that it will lead the students to see why they are here on this earth or what the goal and purpose of their lives should be.

Do such students know the way to heaven? Do they understand that they have been created by God? Do they know that they have sinned and need forgiveness? Do they know about the pardon Jesus has won for them? It is sad that often, in spite of all their learning, very few students know the answers to these basic questions. They have been trained for success in life, but they have not been trained for eternity.

That is where you come in, dear Sunday school teacher. Never forget that you are responsible for the most important part of a child's training. Every Sunday you have the opportunity to train children in the truths of God's Word.

Rejoice that God has chosen you to train children in the way they should go and to show them the way to salvation. Rejoice that you have been called to teach your students that Jesus has redeemed them and that he promises them a better life in heaven. Let this be your joy in teaching Sunday school.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for revealing your Word to us. Thank you for the privilege of preparing your children for eternal life. Forgive us for not always appreciating this privilege. Thank you for fellow teachers who share the commitment to teach. Bless our work so that our students know the way to eternal life and realize their true purpose in this life. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. What programs does your church have to promote Christian education? What could your congregation do to make Christian education a higher priority?
2. What promise does Solomon give us in our text? What motivation does that promise give to Sunday school teachers?

From Darkness to Light

*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.
(Ephesians 5:8)*

About 750 years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Isaiah wrote: “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned” (Isaiah 9:2). When Jesus came into the world, he pointed to himself as the fulfillment of this prophecy: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).



The Ephesians had once been such people—people who had walked in darkness. They had not known the true God or how to come to him. They didn’t know what God’s will for them was or how to live for God. The apostle Paul came to the Ephesians who were walking in darkness and told them about the Light of the world. He explained to them that Jesus Christ was the true God who had become a human being to die on the cross for their sins. Through the proclamation of Paul’s message, God graciously brought them to faith. Now it was as if a light had gone on in their darkened souls. Now they could see. Now they knew God. Now they could begin living as his children.

Your students, too, need to know the true God and how to be saved. You cannot assume that every child in your class knows the way of salvation. New students and visitors may be hearing the gospel for the first time. Tell them over and over again that Jesus died on the cross for their sins and that they are saved through faith in him. You are their teacher. If you do not explain these truths to them, who will?

Dear teacher, as you go about your important work, take comfort in knowing that as you explain God’s Word to your students, God will bless your instruction. What a joy it will be to see your students walking as children of light because you helped them know God’s will and showed them how to walk as children of the light. What greater reward does a teacher need?

Prayer

Dear Lord of light, thank you for bringing us to the light of salvation through the Holy Spirit’s work. We want others, especially our students, to walk in that light. Bless our teaching that it may be effective in bringing young children to faith and in keeping them strong. Be with us this day and always. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. What is your greatest joy in teaching?
2. Why is it important to keep stressing the basic truths of law and gospel to your children? How does that “keep the light on” in their hearts?
3. Read Ephesians 5:15-20. Describe some aspects of walking as children of the light.

Built Up in Christ

Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. (Acts 20:32)

[Note: The wording of this devotion may need to be changed to incorporate the way your Sunday school schedules classes during the summer months.]

We are approaching the summer months and many of us will not be meeting in regular Sunday school teachers meetings. The words of our text carry a beautiful thought for us at this particular time of year. In our text Paul points us to our only source of strength, comfort, and courage—the Word of God’s grace.

Sunday school teachers should never take a vacation from God’s Word. Even though we will not be meeting regularly during the summer, we all need to remain close to the Word of God. We will want to continue to study God’s Word at home. If we have Sunday school during the summer, we need to study our lessons carefully so that we are prepared to share the glorious truths from God’s Word with our children. As for ourselves, we should use opportunities to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior by attending workshops and conventions that may be offered during the summer.

Your children and parents also need to remain close to God’s Word during the summer. Encourage them to attend Sunday school while on vacation. Tell about the joy of family devotions and private Bible study. Plan special summer activities that include Bible study. Most important, emphasize good attendance in your own Sunday school.

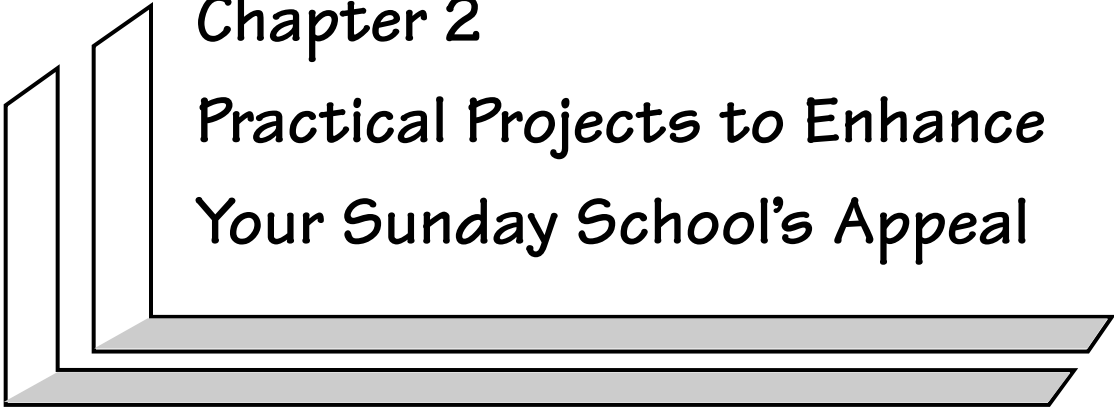
Our text is God’s promise that through his Word he will build us up and give us the inheritance that awaits all of us in heaven. That is all the motivation we need to keep on studying God’s Word.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, Creator and Preserver of mankind, thank you for times when we can rest from our work. Bless the vacation time of our families, fellow teachers, pastors, and all workers in your kingdom. Guard and protect all who travel. Bless us as we continue to study the Bible, worship, and anticipate a new year of teaching. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Teacher Talk

1. Are there any teaching workshops or conventions held in our district that you could attend?
2. Are you satisfied with the summer Sunday school program of your congregation? What can be done to improve it?



Chapter 2

Practical Projects to Enhance Your Sunday School's Appeal

How Would You Spend \$10,000?

Find out what your members think the Sunday school ought to own. Ask them the following question: "If your Sunday school received a gift of \$10,000, how do you think the money should be spent?"

Give the parents a 3" x 5" note card when they bring their youngsters to Sunday School. Ask them to write their suggestions on the card and return it to you. It will be interesting to see what their priorities are. You will learn much about what your parents are thinking.

Dates used: _____



Suggestions, Please

At one of your Sunday school teachers meetings, announce to your teachers and department leaders that you are intending to hold a contest entitled: "The Most Unusual Idea for Improving Sunday School Attendance." Ask them to put on their thinking caps and come up with a new or unusual idea for any aspect of the Sunday school program. This might include attendance, teaching activities, public relations, or congregational awareness. Give everyone a form on which to write the name of an idea along with a description. Materials that are needed and the best time to use the idea should also be included. Set a deadline for the contest. Award a book, such as a new Bible dictionary, to the winner.

Dates used: _____



Your Sunday School in Action

One of the best ways to publicize your Sunday school is to post several good photographs of “the Sunday school in action” on a bulletin board located where congregation members can easily see it. At one of your future Sunday school meetings, ask if anyone is a good photographer or knows of one in the congregation. Ask the photographer to go to the various classes (including high school and adult classes) and take a picture of each class and its teacher. If one of the teachers is the photographer, find a substitute for that teacher on that Sunday.

After you and the photographer have chosen the pictures you intend to use, post them on a large bulletin board. Call your bulletin board display “Your Sunday School in Action,” or something similar. At the bottom or along the side of the display, use a question like “Are You Part of the Action?” as a caption. Leave your display up for several weeks and change the photographs when necessary. You might also want to post this notice on the display: “For further information, contact Mr. or Mrs. John Doe, superintendent.” Let your people know that you are the superintendent and that you are happy to serve in that position.

Dates used: _____



Sunday School—“SS”

Do you want to emphasize the importance of Sunday school to your members? Ask your pastor to give you some time before or after the worship service to make a special announcement about the importance of Sunday school. In preparing to make that announcement, think of words that begin with the letter S (because Sunday school begins with S) and use them in a catchy combination. Your announcement might begin something like this: “Sometimes we refer to Sunday school as SS. SS can also stand for SEARCHING SCRIPTURES. If you come to our Sunday school, you’ll be searching the Scriptures with others and learning what God teaches in his Word.”

Then continue with other words for SS. Here are a few to get you started. SS means SMALL TO SENIORS. We offer classes for all ages from *small* children to *seniors*. SS also means SPIRITUAL SECURITY. You and your children need to grow in faith in Jesus as your Savior. Knowing him gives you *spiritual security*. Sunday school is SOUL SAVING. Invite your unchurched friends to come with you to Sunday school. Help *save souls* by bringing those who don’t know their Savior to Sunday school. Why not have a SUPER SUNDAY? By receiving strength from God’s Word, you’ll have a *Super Sunday*. If you have not been in Sunday school, then START SUNDAY. Don’t put it off. Why wait? *Start* today, *Sunday*.

Dates used: _____



Sunday School Progressive Dinner

Give your Sunday school a shot in the arm by having a Sunday school progressive dinner. Invite all the families of the Sunday school to a potluck progressive dinner. Ask each family to bring a salad, a main dish, or a dessert. Your Sunday school or Christian education budget could pay for the drinks, paper plates, etc.

Ask the parents to take the salads, for example, to the nursery and preschool rooms, the main dishes to the primary-grade rooms, and the desserts to the middle- and upper-grade rooms. Ask some teachers and parents to help serve.

Invite the guests to progress from the preschool department (salads), to the primary-grade department (main dishes), and then on to the upper-grade department (desserts).

After the meal, hold a brief closing devotion. Include singing, a Scripture reading by the pastor or superintendent, and a prayer for the families and the Sunday school. Allow time for fellowship after the devotion.

This family get-together provides an opportunity for parents to meet teachers and other parents. It provides an event that's fun for the children and gives everyone an opportunity for worship and fellowship. You may want to host the event in the middle of the week and increase attendance by inviting friends and neighbors.

Dates used: _____



Education Sunday

For Education Sunday, advertise the Sunday school with several posters placed strategically throughout your church. At your next Sunday school teachers meeting, diagram several posters and ask the teachers to help you make them. Let the group suggest ideas for the pictures and captions. Make different posters or several of one kind.

Here's an idea for one. The title could read: "Shouldn't Your Children Know How Much Jesus Loves Them?" In the middle of the poster place a picture of children. At the bottom of the poster write this caption: "Bring Them to Sunday School September 7 and Every Sunday." Another title could read: "Shouldn't Your Children Know How Important (or Precious) They Are to God?"

Use your imagination to come up with other ideas.

Dates used: _____



Sound Your Horn

Sound your “Sunday school horn” at the Voters Assembly. If your Sunday school superintendent does not usually give a report at your congregational meeting, ask your pastor or congregational chairman if a report could be given at the next meeting.

Include in your report a description of the main item of any Sunday school program: the part of God’s Word you are studying. Let the assembly know if your elementary-level classes are studying Old or New Testament history. Briefly explain what courses the high school and adult classes are covering. If you have a special mission project, explain where the mission is located, who the missionary is, and how the project is being carried out. Name the teachers on your staff. Talk about your enrollment and attendance. Show how the Sunday school fits into the total program of the church and how it helps children grow in serving the Lord. Tell how the Sunday school helps children grow in the following:

- *Stewardship*—Children are regularly taught Bible lessons on stewardship. They memorize Bible verses about giving to God.
- *Music*—The children regularly sing for worship services.
- *Evangelism*—Children are encouraged to bring others to Sunday school. Special lessons about sharing the gospel are taught.
- *Parish Fellowship*—The Sunday school sponsors a special family night, etc.
- *Worship*—Children and high schoolers are taught the importance of worship. Note any activities in which they may have been involved.

The purpose of your report is to show your leaders that the Sunday school is an integral part of the total church program and that you are enthusiastic about the contribution it makes.

Dates used: _____



A Logo for Your Sunday School

If you haven’t chosen a logo for your Sunday school, consider doing so. Children love them, and these logos can be reproduced and placed on the lesson books, notebooks, Bibles, and other books used in Sunday school. Children also love to place the logos on lunch boxes and school items. It is good advertising for your Sunday school.

Dates used: _____



Use Your Camera

Find a camera that takes good pictures. Take some photographs showing your Sunday school in action. Get some good shots of various classes in session. Look for animated class activities, especially among the younger children. Take pictures of puppet plays, dramatizations, and class discussions. Try to stay away from lecture shots. Take pictures in which the teacher is actively involved with the students. Make sure you don't take pictures of backs; parents want to see the faces of their youngsters.

After you have a good sampling of your Sunday school activities, mount the pictures on a display board and place it in the narthex of your church or education wing. Choose a catchy caption for your display such as, "Are You in the Big Picture?"

You might be surprised how many people will look at your display and bring their students to Sunday school so that they can be a part of the experience.

Dates used: _____



Teacher's Handbook

Do you have handbooks for your staff? If not, you may want to give your teachers this added help. The handbook is a booklet that gives current and newly recruited teachers information about the organization and structure of the Sunday school. It also tells what you expect of them.

Include in your handbook instructions for enrolling students and taking attendance. Include the location of all classes (from nursery through adult). Outline the procedure for obtaining a substitute teacher. Explain your teachers meetings and the importance of good attendance. Include procedures for handling discipline problems, obtaining supplies, and having doctrinal questions answered. New teachers feel better if they have the procedure written out for them. They can refer to it often and make sure they are doing things correctly.

The handbook should also contain a complete list of all Sunday school teachers and officers. A good way to begin this project is to discuss it with your present teachers and get their ideas on what to include.

Dates used: _____



Children Need Fellowship

The Bible encourages Christians to have fellowship with one another. This holds true for the children of the church, particularly those in the Sunday school. Ask two teachers each month to plan and organize a social event for the Sunday school or one of its departments. Have everyone take a turn so it doesn't become a chore for one person. Children love the opportunity to join their church friends at a church party, for roller skating, for horseback riding, etc.

Dates used: _____



Invitation Cards

At one of your Sunday school teachers meetings, ask the teachers to help you plan an invitation card to be used as an insert in the Sunday bulletin. Use the insert to invite the members to attend a Christian education service, a Christmas service, a Reformation program, or any other service in which your Sunday school is involved.

The bulletin insert could also invite adults to attend the Sunday morning or weekday Bible classes. Make the cards from 9" x 12" construction paper. Cut each page in half, fold it, and then write the message inside. A drawing or sticker on the cover will enhance the appearance. After your teachers have made a sample, tell them to have their students take some time each Sunday for the next three weeks to make the cards. Determine how many cards each class should make. Your students will love helping. Here are some samples:

*I like Sunday school.
 We learn Bible lessons about Jesus.
 If you come to Bible class,
 I'm sure you will like it.*

Come next Sunday!

*You're invited to come
 to adult Bible class
 next Sunday.*

Please come!

With the help of your teachers, determine on which Sunday you will put the invitations in the bulletin. Primary through junior high classes could work on this project.

Dates used: _____



What Would You Like to Purchase for the Sunday School?

At your next Sunday school teachers meeting, make a list of items your Sunday school needs. On that list include audiovisual aids such as filmstrips, sets of slides, videotapes, posters, teaching pictures, records, audiotapes, projectors, etc. Include books for the church library. Be sure to include reference books the teachers could use for lesson preparation. You and your teachers can probably think of many other items. Also, ask your pastor for his ideas. Use this list to write up a "Sunday School Wish List" bulletin insert and place it in your Sunday bulletin. Some people in your church are looking for opportunities to donate to special projects. You will be giving them that opportunity and also getting needed items for your Sunday school.

Your insert might look like this:

The Sunday school needs your help to purchase some necessary items. If you would like to make a donation toward any of the items listed below, please indicate the amount you are willing to donate on this form.

\$ _____ Videos (about \$15.00 each)

\$ _____ Maps (about \$30.00 a set)

\$ _____ Books (about \$5.00 each)

\$ _____ Flannelgraphs (about \$20.00 each)

\$ _____ Songbooks (about \$9.00 each)

\$ _____ Gift for the Sunday school mission project (any amount)

\$ _____ *Total Donation*

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Dates used: _____



Tapes for Shut-Ins

Ask the teachers to prepare a special tape for your church's shut-ins. The tape can be either audio or video. Begin your tape with songs the children sing during the Sunday school opening devotion. It might include one or two of the hymns sung in church. Some of the students might give a greeting like, "Hi, Mrs. Smith. God loves you and so do I. My name is Jane and I'm in the third-grade Sunday school class at church."

The students might recite a Bible verse or hymn stanza. The hospitalized and the shut-ins appreciate this contact with the Sunday school. Encourage the teachers and one or two students at a time to take copies of the tape to shut-ins or hospital patients. Or you could ask your pastor to take the tape along with him when he visits. Do not make the tape too long.

Dates used: _____



Thank You for Our Teachers

On a given Sunday morning, publicly express appreciation for your Sunday school teachers. In preparation for this event, spend several weeks taking slides or videos of your teachers in action with their Sunday school classes. Try to get each class on film. Arrange with your pastor to hold this event after the church service or during the joint Sunday school opening in the sanctuary. Bring all the children, teachers, helpers, and staff into the sanctuary. Ask the children to sing the song "Thank You Teachers, Our Friends" to the tune of "Happy Birthday to You." You may use the following words or write your own:

Thank you teachers, our friends;
 Thank you teachers, our friends;
 Thank you teachers, we love you;
 Thank you teachers, our friends.

After the song, show the slides or video. Ask the pastor to lead the group in a prayer of thanks for God's gift of teachers. Not only will you be thanking your teachers publicly, you may also get more people involved in the work of the Sunday school. Try it!

Dates used: _____



Prayer Request

Most teachers are good at encouraging their students to pray often and to pray both for themselves and others, but too often that's where it ends. Do you ever give your students an opportunity to pray in class? If so, do you help them think about the specific needs others have? Here is an idea to encourage specific prayer.

Sometimes children are more willing to write down a prayer request than to speak it before the entire group. Prepare a prayer request form and give a copy to each student before prayer time. Provide space for the students to write names of those for whom they want to pray and have them tell about the problem or need of each person. Add a line for a signature if a student wishes to sign the form. Leave a few lines for the students to request a time to talk with you about the problem. Allow enough time for them to write down their prayer thoughts. Collect the forms and use the information in your prayer time. Names do not have to be mentioned unless the students request it. Remind your class to pray for these needs during the week.

Dates used: _____



Let People Know about Your Summer Program

Boldly announce to your parish the wonderful program you have planned for the summer. If you are using the regular curriculum, explain to your members what it contains. If you are using a different approach during the summer, describe that as well. Point out why the students should not miss any of the lessons during the summer.

How can you announce your church's summer Sunday school program? Use the *Sunday bulletin*, the church publication most people read. Place an article in the bulletin each Sunday, or prepare a bulletin insert telling what the next lesson is about and why the children should not miss it. Use your *church newsletter* to explain the educational programs offered during the summer. This publication gets into every home. Place *posters* in good locations throughout your church building. Add an outreach emphasis by placing posters in neighborhood stores. Ask your pastor if you may make a *verbal announcement* about your Sunday school either before or after the worship service. Prepare *notes for the students* to take home. I have found that this simple gesture of informing parents is one of the most effective and inexpensive methods. Some teachers even pin the notes on the preschoolers so they don't lose them. As people leave the sanctuary, ask the ushers to hand out special announcements about your summer program. Or have the Sunday school students do it. Let your own imagination come up with some really creative ideas. Try it!

Dates used: _____



Write-on Slides

This activity will raise students' interest and excitement level. The goal of the project is to visualize a Bible story, its application, or some specific aspect of the story. Buy some "write-on" slides at a photography store. They are usually available in a box of 100. Divide the Bible material you want to present into segments. Give the students colored pencils and ask each student to illustrate one segment of the presentation by creating his or her own drawing(s) on one or more slides. Place all the slides in order and write a script to accompany the slide presentation. Present your slide program at an appropriate time, for example, at a Sunday school opening or a special worship service. This idea will also work using an overhead projector and transparencies.

Dates used: _____



Open House

At one of your Sunday school teachers meetings, suggest having a Sunday school open house. You may want to invite parents and other members of the congregation to attend the Sunday school opening, or invite them to visit a class in session. If you have a large Sunday school, you may want to limit the visits to one department per Sunday and designate which Sundays are "visitor Sundays."

Dates used: _____



Send a Short Letter to Students and Parents

At certain times of the year (for example, after Christmas), attendance tends to become sporadic. At your next Sunday school teachers meeting, discuss the following idea for improving attendance. Ask the teachers to prepare a short letter to send to *all* members of their classes. This note should be sent on Monday. Look at next Sunday's lesson and determine the truth and application of the lesson. In your note, tell the children what you'll be talking about next Sunday. For example, you might write: "George, in our Sunday school lesson next Sunday, we'll be discussing how all of us become afraid at times. Then, we will see what God says about fear and how he promises to be with us in danger. Don't miss the lesson. I'll be looking for you." Sign your name at the end of the note. The parents also need to read the note, so be sure to address it to both the child and the parents.

Dates used: _____



What's the Lesson Next Sunday?

Put a medium-sized bulletin board in a prominent place in your education wing or narthex of your church. Before Sunday morning, mount a picture(s) of next Sunday's Bible lesson. Use a caption such as "Next Week's Lesson," or "Don't Miss Next Week's Sunday School Lesson." Be creative and try other captions to get the readers' attention.

Beside the picture, attach a sheet of paper on which you have written some questions about the lesson. Questions might include the following: "Does God answer my prayers?" "Is God really in control of the universe?" "Are my sins really forgiven?" "Can I be sure I'll go to heaven?" The questions should relate specifically to the lesson that will be taught the following week, and they should arouse the curiosity of the reader. This display will motivate students to come to the lesson, and it will encourage parents to bring their children to Sunday school.

Continue this motivation for a couple months or more. Watch to see if attendance and interest improve.

Dates used: _____



Alternative to Halloween

Hold an alternative celebration for Halloween. Invite the students of the Sunday school to come to the church on Halloween dressed in their favorite biblical costumes. Make certain that parents and children know they are to be dressed in a biblical costume; discourage any witches, goblins, devils, etc. In the meeting area, set up booths that look like barn stalls. Set up each booth for games such as bobbing for apples, bean bag toss, cake walk, etc. After the games, let the students tell about the biblical characters they portray. This will make it a learning activity for them. Give all the children sacks of candy before they leave.

Ask your youth (high school age and up) to help with this party. They will enjoy being part of this evening of fun. Make sure you have organizational meetings prior to the event to take care of all the details. The evening should close with informal worship consisting of singing and prayer.

Dates used: _____



Use the Mail

People of all ages like to get personal mail. At your next Sunday school teachers meeting, ask the teachers to work through their roster of students, noting those children who are regularly absent from Sunday school. Send postcards to them.

What about those children who attend faithfully? Do they and their parents ever hear from you? They, too, need to be commended for their untiring interest and attendance. Ask your teachers to send them postcards as well. They should write a short statement like, "I'm so happy to see you in Sunday school each week. Just thought you'd like to know. Keep it up!" If available, use picture postcards that were made specifically for your area. This simple gesture will help reinforce the good attendance of your students.

Dates used: _____



Teachers Breakfast Workshop

A good place to train your Sunday school teachers is during a breakfast workshop. I suggest scheduling it on Saturday morning from 8:30 to 10:30. At your next Sunday school teachers meeting, ask for some help in getting the breakfast ready. Serve a hot dish, muffins, fruit juice, coffee, and tea. Ask for another group to help do the dishes and clean up. If you and your teachers like this idea, you could do it bimonthly. Serve your breakfast promptly at 8:30 so you have time for the training session.

Either you or your pastor could conduct the workshop. Cover special topics such as opening devotions, planning a lesson, how to use an overhead projector, or discipline in the classroom. You could also use the time to hold a special Bible study. Consider preparing a handout for the teachers to take home.

Close with a brief devotion.

Dates used: _____



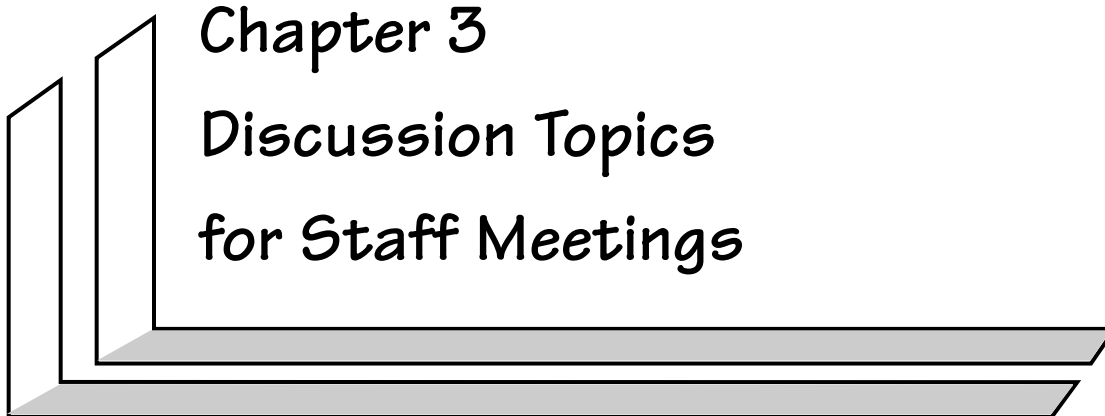
Brief Evaluation for Teachers and Leaders

You may want to use this short evaluation form to discuss with your teachers how your Sunday school is progressing. Discuss each question honestly.

1. We start new classes.
2. We reach out into our community.
3. We teach the lesson with plenty of visual aids.
4. We are friendly and warm to new members.
5. We build enthusiasm for Sunday school through publicity.
6. We recognize students who bring visitors to Sunday school.
7. When new students enroll, we follow up with phone calls or we visit the families.
8. Our teachers are carefully selected and receive adequate training.

Dates used: _____





Chapter 3

Discussion Topics for Staff Meetings

Stress the Basics

Purpose: Foster a discussion about Sunday school basics, especially if there is a decline in Sunday school growth.

Thoughts about the Topic

The Sunday school staff should periodically review Sunday school basics. Discuss with the staff members and teachers the essential elements of a Sunday school program.

- *Education* The purpose of your Sunday school is to teach the Bible, the Word of God. The lesson material must be Bible-based and Christ-centered. If you notice that your teachers are spending more time on social issues and fun and games, your Sunday school is in danger. Jesus says, “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it” (Luke 11:28).

The heart and core of the Bible is the message of Jesus’ forgiveness. Are you spending enough time stressing this? Do you speak the beauty of the gospel message by reminding your students of their sin and by comforting them with Jesus’ forgiveness?

Another purpose of your Sunday school is to teach the students to be more Christ-like. Do you weave together the message of God’s pardoning love in Christ with the message that faith shows itself in a life lived in service to God? If this is not a high priority, your Sunday school is in danger. God’s Word says, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).

- *Evangelism* The Sunday school has always been an agency that reaches out into the community. The best way it accomplishes outreach is to encourage students, parents, and teachers to invite and bring their friends to Sunday school. Do you encourage this form of evangelism by giving a special welcome to new students? Do you notice that your students and teachers

rarely, if ever, bring friends and neighbors to Sunday school? If so, talk about the role of the Sunday school in doing evangelism work. The Bible reminds us, “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

- *Staff* Are the superintendent, pastor, and teachers really “turned on” about your Sunday school? The staff must constantly talk up the value of the Sunday school and the importance of regular attendance. The staff must be 100 percent in love with the Sunday school and must not be afraid to show their enthusiasm to others. They must be convinced that teaching the Word of God is the most important thing that happens in Sunday school classes. Staff members are leaders, and members of the congregation look to them for leadership. If the staff does not show intense interest in the Sunday school, the Sunday school is in danger. Staff members must take to heart Paul’s words to Timothy: “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).
- *Teacher training* Teacher training involves two parts. Prospective teachers must first complete a training course, and once they are teaching, there must be some type of in-service training or study. Have all your teachers completed a training course? Are some assigned without regard to how much training they have received? This is not fair to them or to the students. Do your teachers regularly attend Sunday school teachers meetings where they can study the Bible and share ideas with the other teachers? Do your teachers attend conferences and Sunday school workshops where they can be inspired and get new ideas? If most of these elements are missing, your Sunday school may be in danger. God tells us, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).
- *Records* Do you have someone who is good at keeping records? Enrollment and attendance records give necessary information on the growth and stability of your Sunday school. They help you learn which students are attending Sunday school and worship services infrequently. Records may need to be kept for district or synodical reports. If you do not have an efficient record-keeping system, your Sunday school may be in danger.

What to do about these dangers? With God’s help, you can overcome all of them. Be honest as you appraise your Sunday school. Share your appraisal with your fellow teachers. Plan together to change what needs to be changed and to strengthen and reinforce what is good. Always begin to address your problems with a prayer for God’s help. God wants you to have a healthy Sunday school.

Discussion Questions

1. Have you noticed any changes in your Sunday school? Are they good changes?
2. What kind of evangelism program do you have in your Sunday school? How are new students welcomed?
3. Are the goals of your Sunday school being met? Have you written these goals down?

4. What kind of image do the staff people convey about your Sunday school?
5. Are you pleased with the record-keeping system used in your Sunday school?

Notes

Sunday School Announcements for the Bulletin:

*“The best Sunday school you’ll ever find
is right here at your church.”*

Date used: _____

*“At (name of your church) Sunday school,
over 200 students tune in each week.
Are you one of them?
Come and listen.”*

Date used: _____

*“In stock for immediate use—
Sunday school booklets for your children.
Come and join us
and get your own special booklet.”*

Date used: _____

Stimulate the Senses

Purpose: Review with the teachers some of the more important methods they can use to stimulate their students' senses.

Thoughts about the Topic

Teaching methods can be divided into two groups, methods of *impression* and methods of *expression*. Your students learn when their minds are *impressed* by information from their five senses. They also learn when they *express* what they are studying.

Methods to stimulate the senses are techniques a teacher uses to get a child's attention, to keep it, and to help the student retain what has been learned.

The more senses a teacher can stimulate, the more a child retains. That's why it's so important to use visual aids in your teaching. If you stimulate only the sense of hearing by talking to your students, they will remember less than if you stimulate the two senses of sight and hearing. Wise teachers will always keep this psychological principle in mind and will enhance their talk with visual aids.

Below are some of the common audiovisual aids available to Christian teachers:

- *Bulletin boards* A mounted display can be used to motivate the children and to introduce and teach topics.
- *Chalkboards or white boards* Use them to make lists, draw sketches, study words, and diagram outlines.
- *Displays* A display might feature objects or pictures that introduce a lesson or a new unit.
- *Filmstrips or slides* Many of these are available. Use them to tell a story or present a special topic.
- *Flannelgraphs* Flannelgraphs are designed to teach either a single story or a group of stories. Systems are also available that supply stock characters that can be combined to teach any story in the Bible.
- *Videotapes* Use them to teach Bible stories or special topics.
- *Maps* Every classroom above grade three should have a good supply of Bible maps.
- *Pictures* A picture file is an asset to any Sunday school.
- *Recordings* Records or audiocassettes can teach songs or tell Bible stories.
- *Overhead projectors* Prepared transparencies are available. Or, teachers can explain concepts by writing directly on the transparencies instead of using a chalkboard.
- *Object lessons* Use some object to illustrate a point in a lesson.
- *Puppets* These may be homemade or purchased.

The army had a rule that its teachers had to use a visual aid in every class they taught. This rule forced every instructor to use visual aids. This made the lessons more interesting and helped the students retain more of what they learned.

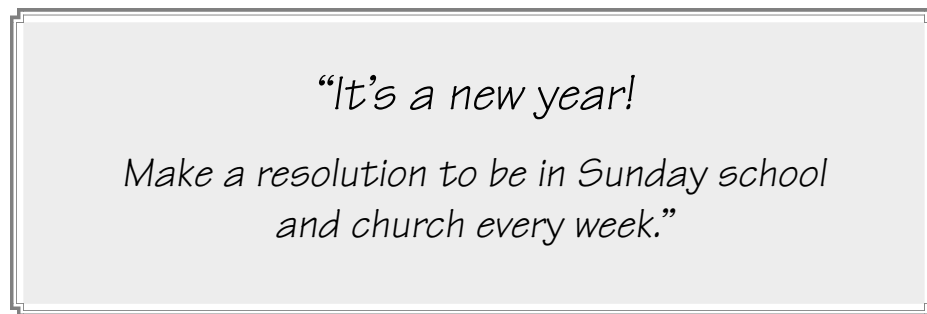
Perhaps this would be a good rule for your Sunday school. A superintendent's first reaction to this might be, "That's too much to expect of my teachers." You may not want to make it a rule, but bear in mind that teachers will experience more joy in teaching and therefore be happier and more satisfied when they see their students' interest level rising.

Discussion Questions

1. Into what two broad categories do teaching methods fall?
2. The more senses a teacher can stimulate, the more a child will learn and retain. Why does this make the use of visual aids important?
3. Which of the methods explained in this lesson can you use? What equipment do you have now? What equipment will you need to purchase?
4. What is your favorite method of impression? Why?
5. Does your Sunday school have an audiovisual aids library? What would you like to add to the library?

Notes

Sunday School Announcement for the Bulletin:



Date used: _____

Involve Your Students

Purpose: Make teachers more aware of ways to involve students in the lesson.

Thoughts about the Topic

With the previous topic we talked about methods of impression. In this discussion we will learn about methods of expression. In methods of expression, the student becomes involved in the learning process by being an active participant.

No matter how many books are read about how to play a musical instrument or how many recitals are attended, a person will never learn to play the instrument unless he becomes *actively* involved in playing it. Active student participation in the Sunday school classroom is just as important.

Here are some methods of expression that will foster student participation:

- *Buzz session* Divide your class into groups and assign each group a question or Bible verse to research. After a few minutes, the group leaders report their findings to the rest of the class. This method works best with older students.
- *Drama* Assign a character from the Bible lesson you are studying to each member of your class. Ask the students to act out the part of their assigned character. Younger children enjoy this method.
- *Activities in the Sunday school teachers' books* Sunday school teachers' books contain a variety of activities that require the students to be involved in the lesson. They contain suggestions and materials for such activities as drawing; coloring; making cutouts, posters, and murals; working word puzzles; finger painting; and researching Bible verses.
- *Singing* Students learn by participating in group singing. Be sure the songs correlate to the lesson.
- *Projects* Suitable projects might include a trip to a senior citizens home, a work project, or taking gifts to the needy.
- *Drill* Use repetition to help students learn Bible passages or books of the Bible.
- *Question and answer* Thought provoking questions make the learner think, arouse his curiosity, and get him to express his thoughts.

Discussion Questions

1. Go through the above list of methods and tell which ones would be suitable to use with your class.
2. Share with the group some of the activities you like to use with your class.
3. Give an example of a good time to use the "buzz session" method.

4. Have each member of your group think of two good questions to use in teaching your next lesson. Share them with the group.
5. Why is drama a good method for involving the students? Describe how a teacher can use this method in a Sunday school class.

Notes

Sunday School Announcements for the Bulletin:

*“It’s not the kind of teaching you’ll find on TV.
Our Sunday school teaches
God’s love for you and your children.”*

Date used: _____

*“Sunday school meets each Sunday
at our church.
Don’t let it pass you by.
You’re invited to attend every Sunday at 9:15.”*

Date used: _____

Improve Storytelling Skills

Purpose: Impress on teachers the importance of this age-old and powerful teaching method.

Thoughts about the Topic

If someone gave you all the money you needed and challenged you to use it to improve the enrollment and attendance of your Sunday school, how would you spend it? Would you spend most of it on physical facilities and equipment?

One Sunday school superintendent suggested a different approach. He said that he would use all the money to hire five of the country's best storytellers. He said he would pay them a salary for teaching a Bible story each Sunday. This would be a wise choice. Storytelling is one of the oldest and most common methods of teaching. Jesus, the master teacher, told stories well.

Think of the last time you watched children when they were listening to a good storyteller. They probably sat with rapt attention. They had a look of joy in their eyes and a look of anticipation on their faces as they wondered what would happen next. Children young and old love to listen to a story.

It is not necessary to hire a professional storyteller; the art of storytelling can be learned. Teachers should keep a few story-telling basics in mind. Teachers must *know the subject*. They must know the facts of the story well. This takes study. Many teachers practice in front of a mirror in the privacy of their own home. Teachers should *practice making the story dramatic* using appropriate voice inflection. Storytellers always *add background detail* which may not be in the story itself. This helps to hold the group's attention. Teachers might *memorize* select parts of the Bible story so that they can use the actual words of the Bible at some point in the story. Storytellers *speak in a soft, well-modulated voice* and speak distinctly and naturally. Good storytellers *keep the action of the story moving along* at a good pace. They *let the characters in the story talk*, giving them a realistic appearance.

However, a Sunday school teacher does not tell a story to the students just to entertain them. He tells the story to help the children grow in the knowledge of God's love. The teacher tells a story that will relate in some way to the lives of the children. A good teacher avoids telling the Bible story for entertainment, yet never sinks into a dry, monotonous recitation of facts. God wants us to do our very best in teaching his Word. According to his promise, he will bless our work.

Discussion Questions

1. Talk about methods you use to tell the Bible story. Which methods work best for your class?
2. How important is it to spend time mastering the techniques of good storytelling?
3. With which age groups can the storytelling method be used? Will it be effective with junior high students?

Notes

Evaluate Your Sunday School

Purpose: Give teachers an opportunity to evaluate their teaching.

Thoughts about the Topic

Teachers often say, "God only expects me to do my best. The rest is up to him." This statement is true. However, it should not keep teachers from evaluating themselves. Periodic evaluation helps teachers become the best they can be.

Evaluation, whether self-evaluation or evaluation carried out by the superintendent, helps staff members discover things about themselves and about the Sunday school. Are students coming to Sunday school with a happy and cheerful attitude? Do teachers and students practice their faith in the way they deal with each other? Are teachers using a variety of methods, and is there an emphasis on using visual aids?

An evaluation will answer these and other questions. It will help teachers discover if they are accomplishing their personal goals and if they are reaching the standards set by the Sunday school staff. Most important, an evaluation will help the teachers to be more confident that their teaching is being done in a God-pleasing way.

Below is a sample evaluation form. Add to it as necessary.

Name of teacher/evaluator _____

Circle the appropriate letter: **E** = Excellent

G = Good

I = Improvement needed

- | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|---|
| E | G | I | 1. The students and teacher are happy and friendly. |
| E | G | I | 2. From what is taught, one can clearly see that this is a Christian Sunday school class. |
| E | G | I | 3. The teacher is enthusiastic about teaching God's Word. |
| E | G | I | 4. The teacher listens to the students' concerns. |
| E | G | I | 5. The instructor can laugh along with the students. |
| E | G | I | 6. Visual aids are used in the teaching process. |
| E | G | I | 7. Teaching is clear. Directions are clear. |
| E | G | I | 8. Students participate. |
| E | G | I | 9. All activities appear to be well planned. |
| E | G | I | 10. The teacher uses a good variety of methods. |
| E | G | I | 11. There are not a lot of outside disturbances. |
| E | G | I | 12. The teacher understands the lesson well and is well prepared to teach it. |
| E | G | I | 13. The teacher has a good attitude and is well groomed. |
| E | G | I | 14. All assignments are understandable. |
| E | G | I | 15. The teacher has good class control and practices good discipline. |

Discussion Questions

1. Do you think it is good to do a periodic evaluation? What is the real purpose of any evaluation?
2. List some other aspects of Sunday school that should be evaluated.

Notes

Sunday School Announcements for the Bulletin:

*“Come to where the Word is—
our church and Sunday school.”*

Date used: _____

*“There’s no need to worry about
your children’s spiritual welfare
when they’re in our Sunday school.*

Come to Sunday school each Sunday at 9:15.”

Date used: _____

Know the Teaching Process

Purpose: Keep the Sunday school staff aware of important factors in the teaching process.

Thoughts about the Topic

At one of your Sunday school teachers meetings, ask this question, “What is teaching?” Let your teachers share their ideas. After your brainstorming session, consider each of the guidelines or rules for teachers listed below.

1. Teaching involves much more than simply imparting knowledge. A teacher is a Christian who wants to strengthen the students in faith and encourage them to live more God-pleasing lives. The teacher convicts the children of their sin, points them to Jesus as their Savior, and assures them of eternal life. The teacher relies on the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of the students.
2. The teacher must know what she wants to accomplish in class. The teacher’s guide is intended to help the teacher plan, organize, and outline the lesson. Beginning teachers, especially, should follow the guide closely until they feel competent to branch out on their own.
3. The teacher should lead students to focus their attention on the lesson. Many teachers, especially beginning teachers, are careless in applying this very important principle. If a student’s attention is not on the lesson, he will not learn. And his interruptions will prevent others from learning. Do not begin until every student is ready and is focused on you.
4. One of the first rules of pedagogy (the art of teaching) is to lead students from the known to the unknown. Jesus used this principle. He began with something people could easily understand and then led them into the mysteries of God’s love.
5. A teacher should talk on the child’s level. A first grade teacher explains something to her class in a different way than an eighth grade teacher does. A teacher should use words, illustrations, and diagrams that the children can understand.
6. A teacher should keep students involved in the learning process. For example, rather than looking up a Bible passage herself, a teacher should ask a student to do it. A student retains information that he discovers by himself for a longer time than information that someone else tells him.
7. A teacher should try to stimulate the students to think. Students find this exciting. Unless they are forced to think about the lesson and how to apply it, they will not learn the lesson. Ask good penetrating questions. Combine fact questions with questions that call for some analysis.
8. A teacher should encourage students to reproduce the lesson for her. If a student can do this, the teacher can be sure that she has communicated the truths of the lesson. One student might be asked to retell the whole lesson, or several students can be chosen to retell the story in parts.

A teacher who practices these principles will remain effective and will hold the children’s interest.

Discussion Questions

1. As a group, come up with your own definition of Sunday school teaching.
2. Why is it important that students be led to focus on the lesson?
3. Explain the rule: "Move from the known to the unknown."
4. Why is it important to involve the students in the learning process?
5. What are some additional ways of having the students retell the lesson?

Notes

Sunday School Announcements for the Bulletin:

*"Each day we get closer to eternity.
Come to our Sunday school each Sunday at 9:15
to learn the way to eternity in heaven."*

Date used: _____

*"This is the place where life is given
and death is shattered.
Our church and Sunday school classes
teach the gospel."*

Date used: _____

Recognize Individual Differences

Purpose: Alert teachers to differences in each student's life of faith.

Thoughts about the Topic

Your students are different physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. In a secular classroom, one of the most apparent differences is in scholastic ability. In any given class, some students will read at a rate of 300 to 400 words per minute, and some will struggle to read 50 to 100 words per minute. Some children have little difficulty with spelling, while others misspell the words even after repeated study.

Sunday school teachers must also be aware of differences among their students. They must realize that students vary in their spiritual maturity. A child who is beginning his life of faith will not understand as many theological terms as one who has studied the Word for many years. Sunday school teachers will want to use simple theological concepts and terms when working with new converts. Teachers will want to take time to thoroughly explain difficult concepts and words so that the students don't become confused and unhappy.

Christian teachers are aware of another difference. Some students come to class with a positive attitude, eager to study the Word and discuss it. But others may not have the kind of home environment that fosters such a wholesome attitude. The student who comes to class with feelings of fear, distrust, and even hatred must be shown love, patience, and understanding. The teacher should pray for that student, administer loving Christian discipline, be a model of Christian love, and help that student grow in God's love. Children soon learn whether a teacher is concerned about them, and they will respond to a teacher who shows them love.

Be aware of the differences among your students and take time to work with them according to their needs. A wise teacher will aim her lesson at the average student and will be willing to make the necessary adjustments for those students who need extra understanding, guidance, and love.

Discussion Questions

1. Why should Sunday school teachers be aware of individual differences in a child's life of faith?
2. How do Christian students differ in their life of faith?

Notes

Assign Memory Work

Purpose: Discuss the importance of assigning memory work.

Thoughts about the Topic

“Why do we have to memorize Bible verses?” asks one of your students. Does this question sound familiar? Apart from some students’ natural desire to do as little as possible, complaints about memorization may indicate that the teacher is committing one or two common errors.

Some teachers fail to explain to the students why memorizing Bible passages is important. Periodically, teachers should explain to the students why they should do memory work. The following three paragraphs will give you some ideas to share with your students about memorization.

First, it is a source of *comfort* to have a wealth of Bible passages stored away in your memory. Passages that tell us about Jesus and his forgiveness are the most important. They give us comfort when we sin. They also let us know that in all things God is on our side, showing his love to us. Other passages can be a real source of comfort when we are going through a crisis or facing a difficult problem. For example, what a comfort it is to be able to recall 1 Peter 5:7: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”

Second, Bible verses stored in memory can help us *witness to our faith*. In 1 Peter 3:15 God says, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” Having a good supply of well-memorized Bible verses helps us give an answer when we are called on to confess our belief in the Bible or to explain what the Bible teaches about a certain subject.

Third, memorized passages become our guide when we are placed in situations where we must decide whether a certain action is God-pleasing or not. They give us *guidance* as Psalm 119:105 says, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” Our minds should be saturated with the truths of God’s Word. The Holy Spirit, working through that Word, will guide us so that God’s name will be glorified through the choices we make.

Sometimes teachers fail to correlate the memory verse to the lesson, or they fail to explain the content of the passage. For example, if the lesson is about God’s care, the teacher should explain how 1 Peter 5:7 (quoted above) assures us of God’s care. The teacher will want to explain the meaning of the word *anxiety* so the students understand that it is another word for worry. When the memory passage is relevant to the lesson and is understood by the students, it will help them remember the content of the lesson during the week.

Finally, a teacher should not assign too much memory work. If there is too much work, the children become discouraged.

Discussion Questions

1. Did you enjoy memorizing Scripture passages when you were young? Why or why not?
2. Give three good reasons for asking your students to memorize some well-chosen Bible verses.
3. Should memory work be assigned regularly or only when the teacher feels the need?
4. What danger is there in assigning too many memory verses?

5. Do your own students enjoy memory work? Try to determine why or why not, and share your thoughts with fellow teachers.

Notes

Sunday School Announcements for the Bulletin:

*“Living can be exciting when you look upward.
Come to Sunday school and
look upward to Jesus with your friends.”*

Date used: _____

*“Not reserved for a privileged few—
our Sunday school is for all.”*

Date used: _____

*“Sunday school and church can only be
a FAMILY AFFAIR when the whole family attends.
Come to Sunday school and
Bible class each Sunday.”*

Date used: _____

Analyze Room Appearance

Purpose: Encourage and convince teachers that room appearance is an important part of good teaching.

Thoughts about the Topic

You may not work in a new educational wing with carpeted classrooms or even have a designated Sunday school classroom, but you still can have a colorful room with a cheery atmosphere that invites children to come and learn.

Pictures, posters, and bulletin board displays that are current invite the learner to come in and learn more of God's great love for his people. It is especially important that your bulletin boards and poster boards show that your room is a place where God's Word is taught. At the very least, a Sunday school room should have a picture of Jesus. It is a good idea to mount teaching pictures to the wall.

Children like a room that is alive with color, has clean furniture, and is light, warm, and cheerful. No one enjoys coming into a room that is bare, untidy, and drab. Do your classrooms need paint? Don't put off getting it done. If your furniture is painted, don't forget to freshen it up, especially the furniture in the preschool and primary areas. Choose bright, cheerful colors for God's young Christians to enjoy.

Keep your classrooms neat and clean. A teacher who doesn't care about room appearance transmits an attitude of "I don't care" to the students. Superintendents should set an example for their teachers by having an organized, well-kept room. They should not forget to compliment a teacher and her students if a room is well organized and shows careful housekeeping.

During such activities as paper cutting and making a collage, there will be a mess. It doesn't hurt to ask the children to pick up paper, pencils, and crayons from the floor. Children are happy to do their part to keep a room tidy. After each class session, students should help put books and supplies back where they belong.

Discussion Questions

1. What can the teacher do about room appearance if the class meets in the balcony, kitchen, or church overflow area?
2. Can a person entering your classroom see that the Word of God is taught there?
3. Why is color so important to a room's appearance?
4. Why should a room be left tidy and well organized?
5. Do you find that your students take pride in their room's appearance?

Notes

Develop Teacher Identity

Purpose: Help teachers understand their role and encourage them to do their very best.

Thoughts about the Topic

Being a teacher is one of the best ways for a Christian to share God's love in Christ. But what is a teacher? Consider the following aspects of being a Sunday school teacher:

1. A teacher is a guide. A guide leads people into new and unfamiliar territory. He must know the road on which he is traveling. A guide leads people to a particular destination. He must be certain of where he is leading his followers. A Sunday school teacher guides students into the truth of God's Word. He must know God's Word well enough to guide his students. And he must be sure of the goals he is trying to help his students achieve.
2. A teacher imparts information. A teacher must impart a certain amount of knowledge. He must explain new and difficult concepts. He should use a variety of methods to impart the truths of God's Word. Lecture is fine as long as it is not overused.
3. A teacher leads students to discover the truths of God's Word. A teacher should lead students to discover biblical truth by having them read and think about the meaning of passages. It's easier to tell students what the passage says, but they will remember more if they discover the truth for themselves. And a truth they discover for themselves will have much more of an effect on their faith and life.
4. A teacher inspires. A class that is inspired is a class that is alive. A good teacher gets the students "fired up" about the new truths they discover.
5. A teacher is a good example for the children to follow. A successful teacher not only teaches by what he says, but also by what he does. Both are necessary. Teacher and student together try to follow the example of Christ Jesus.
6. A teacher administers discipline. This too is part of being a good teacher. Administering discipline to children who are straying takes patience, wisdom, and a proper application of God's Word. Sometimes the discipline takes the form of correcting a child's wrong idea. A child who errs in his or her understanding of salvation is in eternal danger. A successful teacher knows when a student has a lack of understanding and takes measures to correct the misunderstanding.
7. A good teacher is always sharing his faith. A Sunday school teacher is one who shares his own faith in Jesus, his Savior, and lets the class witness a mature Christian. The teacher-student relationship must be one of sharing and experiencing growth together.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the ways a teacher can be a good example to his students?
2. Explain how you would use both the law and the gospel in correcting a student.

3. Do you let your students discover biblical truths, or do you simply tell them the truths? Which is easier? Which is more effective?
4. Share with the group other elements that make for good Sunday school teaching.

Notes

Sunday School Announcements for the Bulletin:

*“Of all the important appointments
during the week,
your Sunday morning appointment
with God is the most important.

Church at 9:00 and
Sunday school at 10:30 each Sunday.”*

Date used: _____

*“We can’t offer anything better
than what we offer you in Sunday school—
the Word of God
each Sunday at 10:30.

You are welcome!”*

Date used: _____

Use an Inspection Checklist

Purpose: Give staff members an opportunity to assess teaching areas.

Thoughts about the Topic

It is good to check the condition of classrooms and furniture. Do classrooms have proper heating? Are they well ventilated, and is lighting adequate? Are hallways unobstructed, and is fire-safety equipment properly located and serviced? Use the checklist below to evaluate your property. A check mark indicates that the item is satisfactory.

Classrooms

- It is obvious that the Bible is being studied here.
- There are bulletin boards.
- How the room looks is appropriate for the age level meeting here.
- There is sufficient lighting.
- There is proper heating, air conditioning, and ventilation.
- The furniture is suitable for the age level using it.
- There is adequate shelving and storage.
- There are enough wastebaskets.
- The fire escape procedure is posted.
- Chalkboards are clean, usable, and at the proper height.
- There are flowers and plants in the room.
- The room is properly equipped for audiovisual presentations.
- Desks and tables are in good repair and well arranged.
- Floors and walls are clean.
- The room is not cluttered.
- All equipment operates well.

Rest rooms

- All fixtures are operational.
- Rest rooms are clean.
- Rest rooms have good lighting and ventilation.

Hallways

- Hall lights are on during Sunday school.
- The halls are clear and unobstructed.
- The walls and floors are clean.

Audiovisual equipment

- There are enough record players, tape recorders, etc.
- All equipment is in good working order.

- ___ Equipment is up-to-date.
- ___ Extra bulbs are on hand for all projectors.
- ___ Visual aids are always being added to the library.

Note: List any other items that you would like to discuss.

Date: _____ Evaluator: _____

Discussion Questions

1. Give all teachers a copy of the checklist and ask them to make their own inspection. Compare the findings.
2. If deficiencies are found, discuss what can be done to correct the problems.
3. If your group finds too many deficiencies, discuss whether a new building is needed. What can you do to initiate a building project?
4. At your next planning meeting, check to see if the deficiencies have been corrected.
5. Are you happy teaching in the space provided for you? Why or why not?

Notes

Sunday School Announcement for the Bulletin:

*“We give no empty promises,
only God’s promises.
You’re invited to our Sunday school.”*

Date used: _____

Concentrate on Opening Devotions

Purpose: Show that opening devotions serve an important purpose.

Thoughts about the Topic

Don't overlook the importance of the opening devotion. Teachers are finding that a bond must be established between them and their students before teaching can begin. An opening devotion provides an opportunity for this and draws the class together through the Scripture lesson, the singing, and the announcements. The opening is a good time to recognize new students and visitors. Children are happy to be introduced to the larger group. It is important that the other children know the new student or visitor and learn the importance of welcoming him or her. Birthdays can be observed during the opening. The leader might want to present the birthday child with a small gift. This brings joy to the child and gives him a sense of belonging.

Special prayers can be brought to the throne of God during the opening. Not only does the prayer ask for God's help, but such a prayer tells the person having the need, "We care." The opening can be a time for announcing church events. These announcements say to the children, "We want you to be there." Children can be good messengers and may remind parents of these events.

Of course, worship is the most important part of the opening. What a joy for your students to worship in song, through prayer, and by listening to Scripture readings. A good superintendent will make certain that teachers are present for the opening so that they can worship with their students. Teachers who use this time to socialize are not giving a good example to their students.

The person conducting the opening worship will work to motivate the students to want to study the lesson for the day. He can do this by using an object lesson or incorporating the story in his devotion.

If you are not using an opening, consider doing so. Keep it short and to the point. And watch your students' interest and excitement grow.

Discussion Questions

1. Are you satisfied with your Sunday school opening devotions?
2. What do you think should be included in an opening devotion?
3. Do several people have an opportunity to conduct the devotions? Is it fair to expect one person to conduct all the devotions? Are all teachers present for the opening? Why is it important that they attend?
5. Should the lesson be introduced in the opening devotion?

Notes

Organize Your Sunday School

Purpose: Give the Sunday school staff an opportunity to review and improve the organization of the Sunday school.

Thoughts about the Topic

A disorganized Sunday school leads to chaos. But a well-organized Sunday school can be an effective educational organization.

One organizational concern is the number and function of staff members. In addition to teachers, the following personnel can aid in organizing the Sunday school: superintendent, assistant superintendent, secretary, treasurer, and department leaders.

- The *superintendent* is the executive head and chief administrator of the Sunday school.
- The *assistant superintendent*, if needed, can help the superintendent by performing certain duties. He might check the records of all students, note absentees, recruit teachers, etc.
- The *secretary* should keep good attendance records, prepare reports, enroll new students, and maintain up-to-date information on every child enrolled.
- The *treasurer* receives and disburses funds while keeping accurate financial records.
- *Department leaders* concern themselves with class setup, class size, obtaining substitutes, and keeping supplies available. They might also help teachers work together.

It is a good idea to write out the duties and responsibilities of each office so that new workers know what's expected of them.

A second organizational issue is class formation. Think about how you divide your students into classes. Do you arrange students by school grades, or do you use some other system? If you grow large enough, you may have to split some grades into two or more classes. If you do this, it might be wise to keep in mind the teachers' and students' abilities and needs and assign certain students to certain teachers. Think carefully about which rooms you have assigned to the various classes. Are the rooms and supplies adequate for the number of pupils? Some Sunday schools maintain a ratio of no more than eight students per teacher.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the purpose of good organization?
2. Do you need more or fewer staff members? Discuss.
3. Ask the teachers to discuss the number of students they have in class. Are there too few or too many students in the various classes?

4. Do staff members clearly understand their duties?

Notes

Sunday School Announcements for the Bulletin:

*“Sunday school is never out of fashion;
God’s Word is always relevant.
Come to our Sunday school
each Sunday at 9:15.”*

Date used: _____

*“Let your family feel safe and secure
in knowing and believing the gospel.
It’s taught each Sunday in our Sunday school.”*

Date used: _____

*“Teachers are eager to share God’s love with you.
That’s what our Sunday school is all about.
Join us at 9:15 each Sunday.”*

Date used: _____

*“Be a good neighbor—
invite your unchurched friends
to Sunday school and church.”*

Date used: _____

