

Gearing Up for Fall!

Summer is a great time! In the world of Sunday School, it appears to be the perfect time to sit back, reflect on how things went this past year, and make plans for the future.

However, in reality summer is also the time for VBS (Vacation Bible School) and for vacations in general, both of which have the effect of making the summer Sunday School schedule seem hectic or even disorganized.

Every time you look around (*or even try to catch your breath*) someone else is off on vacation and you are left looking for a substitute. And all the while, VBS continues to loom in the distance, sneaking up on you little by little, until finally it becomes virtually all-consuming. In the end you may be left with neither the time nor the patience to do your planning for the coming year.

This need not be. But it requires prayer and forethought.

First of all, **quiet your heart**. Take some time to "sit alone" quietly before the Lord. This will take some planning and quite possibly some duct tape... but make it happen! Take a Bible, some paper and a pen with you. Find a quiet place to spend a few hours alone, without interruptions from the outside world, or even from your own adorable children! (*That's where the duct tape comes in...Just kidding!*) Then just take some time to be in the presence of God. Tell Him that you love Him, and thank Him for loving you!

Next, **praise God for His faithfulness**. Think back over the past year. What has been accomplished for the Kingdom of God through your ministry? Think about the lives which have been touched or changed. Thank God and praise Him for all of the events which have positively impacted others for Christ. Keep in mind that we cannot fully know, at this time, which things (no matter how small) will have the most impact in the future. But we do know that God is faithful and that He will make the most of everything which is offered to Him in faith. (*Remember the Bible story of the widow and her two mites!*)

Then **pour out your heart to God** about your hopes and dreams for Sunday School. Listen quietly for the "still, small voice" of the Holy Spirit as He leads you in contemplation about what the future might hold for your ministry. Take notes on things that may come to mind, so that you may discuss them later with your church leadership.

Pray for those with whom you work. Mention individuals by name as they come to your mind. Ask God to bless your efforts and those with whom you will be serving as teachers and administrators. Ask also for wisdom to know which programs and classes to pursue or to change.

Finally, **thank God for blessing you** and for **allowing you to serve Him** through your ministry.

Taking time to do all of these things in the summer will help you gear up for fall. Having already prayed and thought through some new Sunday School ideas, you can take time to explore their feasibility with others and "kick around" a few of the options with church leadership. Then when organizational meetings are finally held in the late summer, you will be better prepared to make the decisions before you.

As far as the challenges that summer itself brings, remember that **God has a plan** and that **He never leaves us alone**. He promises to always be with us. It is He, in fact, and not us, who brings about the enlargement of His Kingdom (even though it may be difficult to remember that when you find yourself knee-deep in the Toddler Room!)

Allow yourself to **rest in the Lord!** Whenever you feel yourself insufficient to the task at hand, remember that God is there and that He is in control. In 2 Corinthians 12:9 God says to the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

When you find that you need help, **don't be afraid to ask for it** (either from God or from those around you.) Make a list of all the things that need to happen next and ask God to provide for everything in His will which is on the list. Then watch what happens!

We serve a big and glorious God and NOTHING is beyond His control. **Keep praying** and **be faithful to the task at hand** and you will be amazed at how God will provide everything you need (and right on time!)

God bless you this summer as you begin the process of **Gearing Up for Fall** and preparing for the year to come!

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