

# Teachers' Training 101

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*Are you called? Not on the phone. Are you led? Not by the nose.*

*INFORMATION FOR ADMINISTRATORS*

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## Starting a Sunday School

There may not be a Sunday School ministry at your church. Often Sunday School comes along after adult believers have been meeting for a while at a particular church location. People realize that children, teens, and even adults learn more about God by studying His Word (the Bible).

This is where Sunday School comes in. (Or, the idea of Children's Ministry in general.)

If you are very excited, and decide to start a ministry right away, you can do so with just a place to meet, a Bible, and some students. (*Of course, you will need the Holy Spirit as well!*) ☺

But soon, you will realize that you must give some thought to what you are trying to accomplish, how you will do it, what you will teach, and who will help you.

Or in other words you must give some thoughts to these ideas:

- **Purpose** – What is the purpose for your ministry? What are you trying to accomplish? What need you are trying to fill?
  - Are you trying to spread the Good News of the Gospel?
  - Are you trying to disciple people who are already believers?
  - Are you trying to provide child care, so that other adults can do other ministry?
- **Priorities** – What do you need to do first? What is the most important thing?
  - What must happen, and in what order, to provide for this most important thing?
  - What needs to happen next? And so forth...
- **Plan** – An outline of how you will accomplish your purpose and fulfill your priorities
  - Think about the following questions to help you figure out your plan.
    - Who will be your students?
    - Who will be the teachers and administrators?
    - What kind of ministry do you hope to provide?
    - What kinds of things do you want to study?
    - When and where will you meet?
    - How do you plan to pay for any expenses which may occur?
- **Pastor** – In each church body there is a hierarchy of people in authority
  - Discuss your ideas and your answers to the questions in this outline with your pastor and/or with other appropriate church leaders
  - To whom will you be responsible in your new ministry role?
  - For whom will you be responsible in your new ministry role?
- **Path** – What do your students need? What will you study?
  - Are your students adults, teens, or children?
  - Are they already believers?
  - What do they know about God already?
  - How much do they already know about the Bible?

## Having a Purpose and Making a Plan

### PURPOSE

What is **PURPOSE**? Purpose is about **WHAT** you do and **WHY** you do it. It answers questions like, “What is Sunday School for?” and “Why do we have it in the first place?”

#### A Purpose Statement for Sunday School Ministry

“To lead others toward a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and to provide a loving, learning environment in which to grow.”

That’s a very nice purpose statement, but what Biblical reason do we have for doing this?

#### The Great Commission

*Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Matthew 28:18-20

The reason behind Sunday School is the Great Commission. So, it is reasonable for you to think of your classroom as a tiny “mission field.” You are there doing what Jesus has asked us to do; to “*make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*”

The **PURPOSE** of Sunday School is based on the Great Commission. So, everything we do there needs to be based on the idea of fulfilling this command that Jesus gave us. Exactly **HOW** you go about that will depend on your church, your beliefs, your culture, and your resources.

Once you have determined your Purpose, then you need to make a **PLAN**.

## PLAN

SPIRITUAL SUPPORT – When you begin planning for your program, remember that you need to have **at least one other Christian** to be involved with it. Let's call it **Spiritual Support**.

Spiritual support means that you have **at least 2 believers involved**. (*You and someone else!*)

Jesus sent His disciples out **by twos** to do ministry. (Luke 10:1) And in Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 we are told “*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.*” Additionally Jesus has promised that “*where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.*” (Matthew 18:20)

So, it makes sense that you should have someone else **to pray with, to talk to, and to consider things** when you are planning any new ministry; especially one as large as Sunday School. If it is just you right now, perhaps you can talk to your pastor or another staff member or elder. Just be sure to get someone to work with you in these early planning stages. *God bless you!*

STRUCTURE, ORDER, and NURTURE

When Starting a Sunday School (or any other outreach program) you have to have Structure and Order, so that you can do Nurturing. Remember “S-O-N.” (Structure, Order, Nurture)

Just like the human body has bones and muscles to give it support, a church program (Sunday School in this case) has to have some **structure** to support it, or it will lie in a heap in the floor.

And just like the human body has a brain and nerves (the Central Nervous System) so that all the parts of the body “talk” together and work well together, a church program has to have some **order** to it, or it will move along haltingly, twitch, or lie motionless on the floor.

The **nurturing** part is what you want to do: It is the **ministry** that you set out to accomplish. It consists of the good things that your Sunday School program will actually provide. (*Teaching others about Jesus, reaching people with the truth of the Gospel, making disciples, serving others.*) The Nurturing part **is the part that everyone will see and be able to appreciate**.

In every case, it is necessary to have the “behind the scenes” things set up, so that the Nurturing (the part everyone sees and can appreciate) happens effectively. If the “behind the scenes” things aren't working... then your ministry part isn't going to work very well for very long. It may twitch, or move along haltingly, or eventually lie in a heap on the floor.

Consider the following questions to help you decide how to set up STRUCTURE and ORDER for your Sunday School program, so that you can provide the NURTURING part (or ministry).

STRUCTURE

Where will you meet? \_\_\_\_\_

When will you meet? \_\_\_\_\_

Who will attend? (Age groups, etc) \_\_\_\_\_

Who will be teaching? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you have already? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What else do you need? \_\_\_\_\_

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How will you pay for expenses that occur? \_\_\_\_\_

ORDER

Who is in charge? \_\_\_\_\_

Who answers to you? \_\_\_\_\_

Who do you talk to, if you have a question? \_\_\_\_\_

Who will fill in for you, if you have to miss a class? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you communicate with other workers/ staff/ students (and parents)? \_\_\_\_\_

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How often do you plan to communicate with workers/ staff/ students (and parents)? \_\_\_\_\_

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Who chooses the curriculum? \_\_\_\_\_

How will you help maintain order in your classroom? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Are there rules (policies and procedures) written down that apply to ministries at the church?

\_\_\_\_\_ If so, do you have access to them? \_\_\_\_\_

NURTURE

Who will you have as students? \_\_\_\_\_

Are they already Believers or not? \_\_\_\_\_

What kinds of things do they need to learn? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What do you hope to teach them? \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you have a curriculum (lessons to teach already written down)? \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you know where to find a curriculum? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you know how to choose a curriculum? \_\_\_\_\_

What other kind of ministries to people do you hope to provide through your program? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Will you plan extra activities on special occasions? (Easter/Christmas/etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Who else will you involve in these extra ministries and activities? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What will you do during a typical class time together? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Will you have snacks, water, or coffee for your students during class time? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, who will help provide those snacks and such? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you feel comfortable praying in class with your group? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have people who will pray for you and your ministry? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you started praying for your ministry yet? \_\_\_\_\_ *This is a good time to start! ☺*

*God bless you in your ministry! May many people come to faith in Christ through your efforts!*

## Being the Administrator of a Brand New Sunday School Program

If you are starting a new Sunday School program, then that makes you an administrator. (I know, perhaps you weren't planning on being an administrator. But, as soon as you start something this big, you are one.) ☺ In addition... If you just started the program, you are probably teaching as well. That's a lot of responsibilities! What does that look like for you?

- You – the Person
  - You must be disciplined yourself
  - Study the Scriptures for your own personal well being and that of your family
  - Be involved with your own spiritual growth and that of your family
  - Remember that the Holy Spirit is working in you and through you
  
- You – the Teacher
  - You must be well acquainted with your materials and lessons
  - You must be dependable (there each time and on time)
  - You must be dedicated
  - You must be disciplined (act appropriately both in and out of class)
  
- You – the Administrator
  - Pray for those who work with you (both over you and under you)
  - Work together with others. (Remember: Two are better than one.)
  - Choose teachers carefully
  - Appoint teachers according to their gifts
  - Meet often with your pastor to discuss the direction of your new ministry
  - Keep excellent records
  - Consider new ideas and suggestions with an open mind
  - Pray asking God to give you discernment and wisdom
  
- You – in the Classroom
  - Remember, order is necessary for learning (not silence, but order.)
  - Don't get mad, get help!
    - If things aren't working, ask for assistance.
    - Make sure you have two adults in each classroom with children
  - Be creative. (No two classes are alike)
    - You may need to have more parents involved with your class
    - You may need to divide classes, so there are fewer children per classroom
    - You may need to play more games and have more activities
    - Break up the lesson into several parts (each one 5-10 minutes long)
    - Provide the children with more responsibilities or opportunities for service

## Working with Groups of Students

As an administrator, one of your biggest jobs will be grouping students into classes and deciding how many and which teachers will work with them. If available, follow your church's policies about the recommended ratio of children to adults. Otherwise, check the recommendations at licensed child care facilities in your area. Here are some suggestions:

- Infants 4:1 (4 infants to 1 adult, maximum)
- Toddlers 6:1
- Preschool (3 years) 10:1
- Preschool (4-5 years) 12:1
- School age (6-18) 15:1

**\*\*Remember, you should always have 2 adults in any classroom with children or teens!**

### Other Suggestions for Grouping Students Together:

#### Very Young Children (Birth to 3 years of age)

- Have at least 2 adults in every classroom (Nursery and Toddler Room included)

#### Preschool and Elementary Age Children (Ages 4-11)

- 4-7 year olds can be in a room together if it is a small to medium size group
- In general, a two year age range maximum for classes is recommended
  - Example: You may group children from 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades together

#### Middle School and High School (Ages 12-18)

- Middle School and High School students like to be together
  - They usually feel that “There is safety in numbers!” ☺
  - However, divide them into smaller groups for a chance at serious talks and meaningful conversations.
- Middle School age students (Ages 12-14)
  - Two to three year age range max. (example: 12-14 year olds together)
- High School age students (Ages 14-18)
  - Two to four year age range max. (example: 14-18 year olds together)
  - For Small Groups:
    - Consider 5-6 Teens per small group
    - That way, everyone gets to talk and to answer questions
    - Also they get to be more involved with activities
    - Remember a 2<sup>nd</sup> Adult is needed in classroom for child safety issues
  - For Large Group:
    - Suggest 15-30 Teens per large group (but could be much larger)
    - At least 1 Adult is needed to lead (or teach) the large group
    - Also you always need a 2<sup>nd</sup> adult in classrooms for child safety issues

## A Special Note about Kids with Special Needs

- Make every effort to involve each child in a classroom environment
- Talk with the parents/ guardians of the child to find out about the child's needs
  - Many children can be involved in classes with little or no extra assistance
  - Some children will need a 1-on-1 helper with them all the time
    - Enroll parents, friends, older kids, teens, etc in these efforts
    - Thoroughly screen and train these volunteers
- It is important to have a well-thought-out plan (involving the parents of the special needs child and the Sunday School staff) to make sure these children receive the care and attention they need, and so that classes can accommodate them

## Choosing a Sunday School Teacher

A candidate for a Sunday School teacher position should be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Christian
- Good Heart (Pure Intentions)
- Gift of Teaching (And of Working with Children)
- Maturity necessary to maintain a safe and orderly classroom, without being heavy-handed
- Bright and insightful enough to stay one step ahead of the class

**Christian** – This one seems self-explanatory. If the person is not a Christian, it is impossible for that person to lead others to Christ. Do not ask a non-Christian to lead a Sunday School class.

**Good Heart (Pure Intentions)** – The only really good reason for wanting to be a Sunday School teacher is to want to help others know more about Jesus. If there are any other intentions (such as a selfish desire for a popular position) the candidate for the position should be excluded from consideration, if possible. **All volunteers who work with children** should successfully pass a background check before being allowed to interact with children or teens. NOTE: *When working with children, it is necessary to make sure that teacher candidates have pure intentions toward their potential students. If there is any question of an abusive situation occurring, it would be best to redirect the teaching candidate to a different place of service in the church.*

**Gift of Teaching** – “Are all teachers?” No they are not. Teaching is a spiritual gift, given by the Holy Spirit. Without it, classes will not thrive and students will not move forward in their walk with Christ. Be very careful when choosing teachers for children. Make sure that they not only have the gift of teaching, but that they also work well with children. If candidates do not have experience working with children, consider trying them out as classroom assistants with established teachers. They may need a supportive environment like this for you to be able to see how well they can do. Many classroom techniques can be learned by observation, and your teacher candidates may blossom before your eyes into the wonderful teachers they can be.

**Maturity to Maintain A Safe and Orderly Classroom** – It is necessary for teachers to be mature enough to ensure that their classrooms are run in an orderly fashion and that children left in their care are safe. If the maturity of the candidate is in question, or if they do not seem to have the wisdom necessary to prevent foreseeable problems from occurring, wait for a while.

**Bright and Insightful** – Every teacher must have the mental ability and insight necessary to be able to understand the lessons they will teach and to present them to their classes. If there is a question that the candidate is not gifted in this way, perhaps the candidate could be asked to volunteer as a teaching assistant first, so that his/her abilities may be more easily evaluated. NOTE: *The Holy Spirit is able to help us use our abilities to their highest level. No candidate should be turned away just because they may not have a lot of education or other training*

## Maintaining a Clean and Safe Classroom

Many churches have Policies and Procedures for Safety and Sanitation. If so, review these and follow them routinely. If there are none available, talk to your pastor about establishing some.

- SAFETY – The environment where class is held must be safe
  - (Especially with children) Use the highest safety standards available to make decisions on updating equipment, furnishings, fixtures, and toys in room
  - Do not ADD unnecessary danger
    - Be careful with games
    - Be careful with sanitation
    - Be careful with snacks (Watch for allergies – NO NUTS!)
      - Do not provide nuts to small children (danger of choking)
    - Be careful when planning outings of any kind
  - Background checks are a MUST on all adults who work with children
  - Review and follow your church's guidelines for releasing children to parents or other adults after class
    - If no guidelines exist, talk with your pastor about creating some
  - The classroom must be a friendly and safe place
    - There must be interpersonal safety among the students
    - Students must not feel threatened by teacher (staff) or other students
    - Do not allow fights, threats, insults, or other forms of verbal abuse
    - Do not pick on (or tease) people in class
    - Include everyone in games and activities, if at all possible
    - Encourage respect for everyone in classroom
    - Remember: *Do to others what you would have them do to you.*
- SANITATION – The environment where class is held must be clean.
  - (Especially with children) Use the highest sanitation standards available for equipment, furnishings, fixtures and toys in room.
  - Special attention for Nursery and Toddler rooms (toys, changing tables, etc)
  - Special attention for Restrooms (or Toilets)
  - Keeping common areas clean helps decrease the spread of diseases
  - Keeping areas free of dirt and dust will help children with allergies do better
  - Use a 10 Percent Bleach Solution to Disinfect Surfaces and Toys after use
 

- Viruses and bacteria can be killed by washing down surfaces with a 10% bleach solution. (9 parts water:1 part liquid bleach)
    - Example: 2 ¼ cups water and ¼ cup of liquid bleach.
    - Mix well and place in container to spray on surfaces, tables, and toys
    - Spray surfaces and then wipe down with a clean rag
    - **Don't get the bleach solution on fabrics, or it may discolor them!**

## Deciding What to Teach!

*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*  
2 Timothy 3:16-17

The Word of God is glorious and He has given it to us. It is enormous and marvelous and the Holy Spirit reminds us of what it says to help lead us into all truth.

But no one can absorb it all at once. It would be like trying to eat a whale! You can't do it!

However, if someone takes a little bit of it and makes it into a wafer for you, then you can take the wafer and be nourished by it.

Our job, as teachers, is to take little portions of the Word of God and make them into lessons to provide to our students, so that they can be nourished by them.

### NOTE:

Often, especially in large, well-established churches, there is a set curriculum that has already been established. Then there is not a question of what you will teach, but only the question of whether or not you will teach; and if you do, with what age group do you wish to be involved.

Some people know that they prefer to work with Adults, or with Teens (Youth). Many times the curricula for these groups change over time, as they are chosen based on the perceived needs of the groups. It is possible, if you have a particular area of interest or expertise, that you may be asked to lead a study in one of these groups for a period of time.

Other persons prefer to work with children in elementary school, preschool, or in the Nursery and Toddler rooms. In these cases, it is usually only necessary to speak with your Sunday School Superintendent or other leader, and volunteer. Typically after a background check (to ensure the safety of the children) and some training, they will put you to work right away! 😊

However... if you are starting up a Sunday School, or even just considering starting a new class, then you have to decide what you are going to teach.

In that case... read on! This is for you!

## Considerations in Deciding What to Teach

Ask yourself these questions and think about the answers. They will help you as you consider what you need to teach your class. You may need to make a list of things you want to teach and work your way down the list over a period of time.

- Where are you students? (In age and in spiritual maturity.)
  - Are they Christians?
  - Do they know anything of Christ?
  - What do they need?
- Age of students:
  - Children
    - Readers (7 and older)
    - Non-Readers (4-7)
    - Nursery and Toddler (Birth to about 3 years of age)
  - Youth or Teens (12-18)
  - Adults (18 and older)
- What do YOU know?
  - Basically you have to at least stay one lesson ahead of your students! 😊
  - What has God been teaching you in your own life?
  - Some people have a clear indication of what they should teach and how. Others do not. If you do not, then pray. God will lead you in your decision.
  - Discuss all of this with your pastor or another person who helps oversee the Sunday School classes.

NOTES: \_\_\_\_\_

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## What to Look for in a Good Sunday School Curriculum

When looking for a good Sunday School Curriculum remember that it must...

- Be Age Appropriate (taking into account developmental abilities for children)
  - For Children
    - Non-readers or “Pre-Readers” (4-7)
      - Listen to Bible Story
      - Respond to story verbally (ask and answer questions)
      - Respond to story through planned activities such as worksheets, coloring, drawing, singing songs, or playing games
    - Readers (7 and older)
      - Incorporate reading of the Bible (Bible stories)
      - Bible verse memorization
      - Writing, puzzles, age appropriate games
      - Learn to look through the Bible for answers to questions
  - For Teens (12-18)
    - Hear Bible Truths and Read from Bible
    - Discuss how these truths apply to their lives
    - Respond to Bible Truths with activities such as games, skits, role-playing
    - Exercises in service to others (increasing as time goes on.)
  - For Adults (18 and older)
    - Read through Bible passages together
    - Discuss truths found there as a group
    - Discover how these truths apply to our lives
    - Gain a general overview of the history and teachings of the Bible
    - Gain a deeper understanding of various passages of the Bible
    - Develop disciplines such as Bible reading and prayer
    - Learn to teach others about Jesus
- Have some reasonable, overall approach to covering the material at hand
  - Look at the set of lessons and the individual lessons themselves
    - Each lesson should be short, informative, and able to stand on its own
    - The lessons in a series should ALSO build upon one another
- Teach not only Bible lessons, but also new skills and disciplines (based on age and needs)
  - Examples include: Bible verse memorization, Learning to look up things in the Bible, Prayer, Witnessing to others, and Service to others

## Choosing a Sunday School Curriculum

Of primary concern are the following things:

- It must be Bible-based and Christ-honoring.
- It must encourage students to come closer to God
- It must take students from where they are and move them forward

Or, to sum up, a good curriculum points you towards Jesus, gets you into the Bible more, and moves you forward in your spiritual walk.

- Learning more about Jesus
- Accepting Jesus as Savior
- Becoming dedicated disciples
- Sharing the Gospel with others

In addition, the teaching of the curriculum must agree with the general belief systems of your church. *(Always check with your pastor before using any new curriculum.)*

Secondary considerations in curriculum include the following:

The curriculum should have some reasonable, overall approach to covering the material you wish to study. And, while the whole set of lessons should gradually build upon one another, the individual lessons should be short, informative, and able to stand on their own

The curriculum should not just teach Bible lessons, but also new skills and disciplines *(depending on the ages of the students and their needs.)* Some examples might include:

- Bible verse memorization,
- Learning to look up things in the Bible,
- Prayer
- Witnessing to others
- Service to others

In addition to these things, a curriculum for children needs to be able to expand and contract a little to fit with your particular group and the amount of time you have allotted.

Finally, for children, the curriculum must be very age-specific. It must take into account the mental and physical abilities that develop with the child.

Arts and crafts projects should be challenging for the student, but easy enough to do for that average age group. For example: Do not expect little 4 year old children to be able to do complex art activities. They will become frustrated and disinterested. Instead choose a project which allows them to explore new things they can do, or a new media they haven't yet tried.

## Abilities by Age (Children)

Children grow up very quickly. They always seem to be changing! Sometimes it can be difficult to keep up with them! Being aware of how they grow and develop can help us as we plan for their care and comfort in our classrooms. It can also help us understand how to better plan and present our lessons and activities.

Each child, as it grows, develops physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. What follows is a brief discussion of how children typically grow in each of these areas. This list is not all-inclusive and is meant only to help guide you as a teacher.

### Children – Birth to 2 years

- Changing rapidly with increasing age
- Learning about themselves and close family
- Learning language (hearing and then speaking)
- Learning to move around and walk
- Learning to follow simple commands
- Learning to trust
- In the Classroom:
  - Create a positive atmosphere (Lots of love!)
  - Sing songs to the children
  - Clap hands together
  - Repeat words and then short phrases
  - May want to have soft music in classroom.
- Children this age enjoy individual play with adult watching or participating
- Spiritual Messages they need to hear:
  - You are loved.
  - God loves you.
  - God loves your Mommy and Daddy.

### Children – 2-3 Years Old

- Exploring and learning about the world around them
  - Often explore things by trying to put them in their mouths (be careful!)
- Developing large motor skills (leg and upper arms)
  - Perfecting walking
  - Running and jumping
  - Climbing
- Talking
  - Learning to use complete sentences
  - Lots of questions and answers
- Learning shapes, colors, names of things

- Children this age enjoy individual play, side-by-side in a room with others
  - Blocks, simple puzzles, dolls, stuffed animals, balls
- Can do some small group activities for short periods of time
- Spiritual Messages they Need to Hear
  - God Loves you
  - God loves your family
  - God made everything
  - Jesus loves you
  - We can Pray
  - God is...(Good/ Truthful/ Caring)

#### Children – 3-4 Years Old

- Learning how they relate to their family (and to people outside of their family)
- Learning to separate from family members for short, predictable periods of time
- Learning to tell stories of their own, using more than one sentence or thought
- Learning numbers in sequence, and how to count small objects
- Learning the alphabet and simple songs
- Perfecting large motor skills (legs and upper arms)
  - Running, Jumping, Climbing
  - Standing on one foot/ balancing
  - Walking up and down stairs
  - Dancing, Hopping, Marching
  - Kicking a ball, throwing a ball
- Developing fine motor skills (hand and fingers)
  - Clapping hands, picking up small objects, early coloring
  - Working with clay / Play-Doh, very early drawing, Finger-painting
  - Early writing and tracing skills
  - Songs with hand and finger motions
  - Very early work with things like scissors and glue (with lots of supervision! ☺)
- Children in this age group enjoy these types of play:
  - imagining things and “pretend” play
  - playing in groups of 2 or 3 children their own age
  - playing games with larger groups of children for short periods of time
  - exploring new sounds, textures, colors, smells, tastes
  - sorting by color, shape, size, and similarities
- Hearing and Understanding Bible Stories
  - Able to listen to and understand short Bible Stories
  - Able to remember main person in story
  - Able to remember and repeat a few main points in story
- Very concrete in their thinking

- Spiritual Messages they Need to Hear
  - God cares about you and your family (mother/father/brothers/sisters/etc)
  - God made everything.
  - God/Jesus loves you.
  - God made you.
  - You are special and unique (and valuable to God and others.)
  - God hears our Prayers.
  - God is... (Dependable, Trustworthy, Always Good)
  - There is a difference between Right and Wrong

#### Children – 4-7 Years Old

- Learning how they relate to God, to family members, and to other people in the world
- Learning more and more about the world (outside of home) and what it is like
- Learning to separate from family members for extended periods of time in a day
  - Learning new skills to help take care of themselves when away from family
  - Building confidence in their new abilities
  - Making friends (outside of family members and other familiar people)
- Learning to read, but usually not yet “fluent” readers
  - For purposes of curriculum, this age group is referred to as “Pre-Readers”
  - Learning to write name well
  - Learning to write all of the letters
  - Learning to read, write, and copy individual words and short sentences or phrases
  - Learning the fundamentals of spelling
- Learning about numbers and arithmetic
  - Counting numbers, and learning to write numbers (up to 10, 100, and 1000+)
  - Learning to do Addition and Subtraction
  - Multiplication and Division introduced (or taught)
  - Early mathematical word problems
    - Q. Fred has two apples, if he gives you one, how many will he have left?
    - A. None... Fred ate his apple! 😊 (*Just kidding!*) Real Answer: One
- Perfecting large motor skills (legs and upper arms)
  - Running, Jumping, Climbing, Standing on one foot/ balancing
  - Rhythmic Movements such as: Dancing, Hopping, Marching
  - Complex skills such as: kicking a ball to someone else, throwing a ball into something, batting a ball, running a race with others, jumping rope, etc
- Perfecting fine motor skills (hand and fingers)
  - Clapping hands, Snapping fingers, Picking up and working with small objects
  - Coloring (simple to complex drawings) with crayons and markers
  - Drawing stick-figures, persons, animals, things, and places (house, etc.)
  - Finger-painting, and eventually Painting with a brush

- Creating objects with clay / Play-Doh
- Songs with more and more complex hand and finger motions
- Writing letters, numbers, name, words, and later short phrases or sentences
- Children in this age group enjoy these types of play:
  - imagining things and “pretend” play
  - playing in progressively larger groups of children for longer periods of time
  - discovering more about sounds, textures, colors, smells, tastes
  - Working with paint, colors, markers, glue, scissors, string, yarn and other media
  - Playing simple instruments: drums, cymbals, bells, etc. (Usually very **loudly!**)
  - Singing familiar songs as a group
  - Dancing, marching, and moving to music
  - Simple games that require some new skill
  - Acting out stories and re-telling stories
- Spiritual Messages they Need to Hear
  - God loves you.
  - God loves everyone. (Family, friends, neighbors.)
  - God made everything perfectly.
  - God knows you.
  - God made you special and unique
  - You are valuable to God and to others.
  - God hears our Prayers.
  - God is... (Dependable, Trustworthy, Always Good)
  - There is a difference between Right and Wrong
  - God has been involved with us through history.
  - God has a plan for the future.
  - Jesus is God’s Son.
  - Jesus loves you.
  - Sometimes we sin (We choose to do things that we know are wrong/bad).
  - Reassure child that we all make mistakes. Mistakes are not the same as “sins.”
  - Jesus came to pay for all our sins.
  - Because of what Jesus did for us, we can live with Him forever.
  - We can accept Jesus as our Savior.
- Hearing and Understanding Bible Stories
  - Able to understand (and answer questions about) the main points of story
  - With Timeline, better able to understand how stories go together historically
  - Beginning to understand abstract concepts such as: self-sacrifice, love for others, faith, doubt, sin, guilt, and forgiveness.
- Learn to pray together

## Children – 8-10 Years Old

- Goals for this age
  - Accepting self; learning about strengths and gifts
  - Making friends; learning to get along with others
  - Understanding that we are all different – accepting differences
- Beginning to learn about their role in society, responsibilities to family, friends
- Early Readers – Able to read with increasing ease/ Reading for information
  - Learning to look things up in the Bible
  - Able to copy passages from Bible or textbook
  - Able to answer written questions with short answers or sentences.
  - Play written word games
  - Learning to write paragraphs and give oral reports
- Learning to do different types of chores and work at home and school
- Can play complex group games and even competitive sports (soccer, baseball, volleyball)
- Fine Motor Skills
  - Very good with scissors and glue
  - Can do detailed decorations, complex craft projects
  - Can learn basic sewing, knitting, crocheting, baking, cooking, etc
  - Can learn to use a hammer, screwdriver, saw, etc
  - Can learn basic “camping skills” – Putting up tent/ planning a meal/ starting a fire
- Can do word puzzles and play math games (memorizing multiplication tables)
- Memorizing sections of scripture (Examples: 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, Lord’s Prayer, Beatitudes)
- Memorize books of the Bible, names of disciples
- Learn to Pray together and individually
- Can begin to understand historical overview of the Bible
- Spiritual Messages they need to hear
  - Salvation message
  - We can accept Jesus as our Savior.
  - God loves you and everyone else that you know and meet
  - God knows all about you and loves you just like you are
  - God has a wonderful plan for your life
  - God will never leave you or forsake you
  - You can trust God
  - God is all powerful, all knowing, and always present
  - There is nothing you can do to make God love you any more than He does
  - There is nothing you can do to make God love you any less than He does
  - Jesus is The Way.
  - We are saved by grace (because God is generous), not by works (or what we do)
  - You can tell others what God has done for you

## Children – 10-12 Year Olds

- Goals for this age
  - Accepting self; learning more about strengths and gifts
  - Making friends; learning to get along with others well
  - Learning techniques to resolve conflict and to handle own emotions
  - Understanding that we are all different – accepting differences
- Proficient Readers – can read very well either silently or out loud
  - Read for self-enjoyment and relaxation
  - Read for information
    - Able to use information to write reports/ papers
    - Find answers to questions and write them down using paragraphs
- Children this age enjoy this type of play:
  - Complex, thoughtful games such as chess, checkers, and other board games
  - Team games/ competitive sports and athletic events
    - Learn importance of and enforce safety measures for games and activities
  - Complex arts and craft work, as well as other complex skills
    - Paintings/ sculpture/ beadwork/ leatherwork/ t-shirts/ sewing projects
    - Cooking meals/ doing laundry/ cleaning / building small projects
  - These activities mirror adult type activities and help child learn life skills
- Encourage participation in group chores in classroom
  - Cleaning up area each week
  - Preparing and serving snacks to group
  - Taking turns doing other chores
  - Teaching responsibility for self and others in group situation
- Practice service to others
  - Encourage group projects to help the elderly, sick, infirm, or needy
  - Work with younger children/ mentoring them/ encouraging them
  - Supervise younger children (with some adult oversight)
- Pray together or individually; also lead group in prayer
- Bible drills/ Bible passage memorization/ write down favorite verses
- Encourage treating others kindly, both in and out of class
  - Discuss 1 Corinthians 13 “*Love is patient, love is kind...*”
  - Learn that Jesus commands us to “*love one another.*”
  - Discuss and practice treating others with love
  - Discuss ways of resolving conflict in peaceful and mature ways
    - Speaking the truth in love
    - Expressing frustration and anger with calm words, seeking a resolution
    - EX: When \_\_\_\_ happens, and you do \_\_\_\_\_, I feel \_\_\_\_\_.
    - “When we are sitting together, and you pinch me, I feel sad and angry.”

- Encourage spiritual disciplines of praying/ giving offerings/ reading Bible
- Able to understand more “abstract” ideas, such as:
  - Holy Trinity
  - Atonement for Sin
  - Holy Spirit leading us into all truth
  - Prophecy – which foretells the future
  - Old and New Covenants
- Provide a broad overview of whole Bible
  - Finding out how the Bible all ties together historically
  - The Bible tells about Jesus from beginning to end
  - Learn about the different books in the Bible
  - Who wrote different parts of the Bible and why
- Also use Bible to help provide deep answers to specific questions
  - Who is Jesus?
  - Why did Jesus come?
  - Why/How does God love me?
  - What am I supposed to do with my life?
- Spiritual Messages they need to hear
  - Salvation message
  - We can accept Jesus as our Savior.
    - Children this age may wish to accept Jesus as their Savior
  - God loves you and everyone else that you know and meet
  - God knows all about you and loves you just like you are
  - God has a wonderful plan for your life
  - God will never leave you or forsake you
  - You can trust God
  - God is all powerful, all knowing, and always present
  - There is nothing you can do to make God love you any more than He does
  - There is nothing you can do to make God love you any less than He does
  - Jesus is The Way.
  - We are saved by grace (because God is generous), not by works (or what we do)
  - You can tell others what God has done for you

## Abilities by Age (Youth / Teens) – 12-18 Years Old

Teens are on the exciting (and sometimes challenging) journey from childhood into adulthood. It is during this important period of time that they begin to “break away” from their parents and become individually functioning adults. (Sometimes this goes smoothly, and sometimes it does not.) But as one of the important persons in their lives during this period, YOU as their Sunday School teacher must know as much as possible about what they are going through during this stage of their life, so that you can interact with them in more helpful and meaningful ways.

Here are some of the important things going on in their lives during this time period...

- Learning that “I am a person, who is becoming an independent adult in society.”
  - Usually they are terrified
  - They are wondering if they will be accepted by their peers (friends)
  - They are wondering if they will be alright on their own one day
  - More than anything they want to be accepted and loved, no matter what
- Physical Growth and Development now includes moving toward sexual maturity
  - This throws in a whole host of new feelings, which may be confusing
- Time when they make their faith their own (or possibly abandon it altogether)
  - Not their parents’ faith, or their teachers’ faith, but their own faith
  - They have questions/ doubts
  - Occasionally their doubts are quite disturbing to them (or to their parents)
    - If so... Stay calm. Encourage questions.
    - Rejoice with them that they are going through this process.
      - (Even though it is difficult!)
    - Reassure them that you are certain they will find their answers
      - (Because God is there, and He is very, very faithful)
  - Be supportive of the child during this process
- Application of Bible Truths
  - This age group asks (like Pontius Pilate asked Jesus) “What is truth?”
  - They want to know if they can believe the things you are teaching them
  - They want to know if they can trust what the Bible says is true
    - Whether or not they say any of this out loud, they are still thinking it
  - They want to know that God really cares about them as an individual
- Teenage Characteristics
  - May consider themselves indestructible; but actually they can be quite fragile
  - May consider themselves (or their friends) to be right all of the time
    - They are “*often wrong, but never in doubt.*”
  - They engage in thoughtful discussions of moral issues, philosophical issues
  - They want to understand why people say one thing, but do another
    - Often frustrated by this sort of behavior in friends, relatives, society

- Questions teens need the answers to:
  - How do I relate to God?
  - What does that mean to my life?
  - How am I supposed to live my life?
  - If God's going to judge me, how do I want to live?
  - What gets me saved? (Only what Jesus did for me.)
    - Our behavior (even our good behavior) is NOT what saves us.
  - Why be good? (Jesus said, *"If you love me, you will obey my commands."*)
- Things Teens need to learn to do
  - Read the Bible themselves, especially to find out truths
  - Read the Bible a LOT as a class or small group
  - My absolute favorite quote about bringing your Bible to class, is from my friend, Mr. Calvin R., an award-winning teacher, who once told a group of students:
    - *"I want you to have your Bible with you every time you come to class. Because if you have it with you, then it's more likely to fall open. And if it falls open, then we are more likely to read something out of it. And if we read something out of it, then we might just learn something."*
- Spiritual Truths they Need to Hear
  - Teens are able to learn and understand profound truths from the Word of God
  - They have a keen sense of right and wrong, and desire justice
  - They are very idealistic, and are often disturbed when things don't work out right
  - They need to learn that God can be trusted at His Word
    - That He loves them and cares for them
    - That He has a plan for their lives
    - That they can trust Him to always be there for them, no matter what
    - That God's way is the best way

As difficult as this age can be, it is a VERY important age, because if teens don't figure out these things (how they fit into the world and relate to God) at this age, then they risk carrying all of their confusion and insecurities into adulthood; and risk becoming poorly functioning adults.

Therefore, it is crucial that you **WORK HARD** with teens, to help them through this tough time.

## Other Ideas for Working with Youth (Teens)

Here are some hints from my good friend, Lynn M. a wonderful teacher of 12-14 year olds:

- Consider separating boys and girls into different small groups during discussion times
  - But, *“only if you want them to talk or to learn anything.”*
  - Lynn’s reasoning for recommending small groups: People of this age *“often find members of the opposite sex so distracting that you can’t get them to talk about anything important, if they are together in mixed groups.”*
- Provide a nice, safe, place where they can burn off some of their excess energy
  - Lots of FUN games
  - Encourage activities outside
  - Organize service projects that get them working together
- Or basically, as Lynn says about this time of life: *“Just help them get through it.”*

Other ideas that will help:

- Plan Activities where you demonstrate normal social behaviors and good manners
  - Involve a few, fun, older folks (they will serve as mentors and examples)
  - Dinners (where they dress up and serve people, or provide entertainment)
  - Dances – (square dances, if nothing else)
    - Teach manners at dance
  - Movie Night
    - Show an old favorite movie on a wall or big screen
    - Remember to “sell” popcorn and soft drinks
  - Outings to various places/ camps/ etc
    - Lots of chaperones (1 adult for every 4-5 teens)
    - Spread the chaperones out among teens (don’t hide in kitchen together)
    - Campfires – can have some fun, and also have some serious talks
- Plan Service Projects
  - Often teens/ youth don’t realize their built-in desire to help others
  - Responsibility and Service to Others help teens transition into their roles as adults
  - Very often churches miss opportunities to help teens understand that they are a vibrant, important part of the church body. Service helps the teens to learn this.
  - Plan Regular Group Events to help others
    - Make cookies or other baked goods
    - Visit the elderly
    - Help a widow with house or yard work
    - Make blankets to give away
  - Pair teens with younger children in other classes at church
    - Have teens read to children, play games, encourage and mentor them
    - This is good for the teens AND encouraging for the younger children
    - Helps build fellowship within the church body

- Involve the teens in planning the service projects
  - Talk about opportunities
  - Say things like: We want to help people. We need some people to help. Who do we know who needs some help? What kind of help do they need?
- Small Groups
  - Use to discuss how we apply Bible truths to our lives
  - One leader (mature Christian) who is older than group by at least 4 years
  - One or more assistants (Christians) who are older than group by at least 2 years
  - Women leaders with girls and Men leaders with boys
  - 5-7 students in a group. (Combine groups if not enough students present)
  - Teach, ask questions, confront gently, help students find answers to questions
  - Small groups must be a “safe place”
    - No teasing
    - Listen politely while others are talking
    - No repeating stories told to the group in confidence
  - Have a really “great” name for your group (and some sort of “gimmick”)
    - The importance of this cannot be overstated – especially with boys
    - EXAMPLE: *Our son, David, had a small group at camp that they called the “Ninjas.” The first day, he taught them how to cover their faces, Ninja style, with a t-shirt. All week at camp whenever he yelled “Ninjas,” they responded “Hi!” And then they would try and become **invisible** by hiding behind something! The kids had a great time, and I’m sure their parents were horrified when they heard about it all later on... (Making the whole experience just that much greater!!)*
  - Have fun!
  - Talk about serious stuff
  - Your goal is to discuss how to apply biblical truths to your own lives

### Suggested Schedule for Middle School/ High School Classes

- Welcome
- Prayer
- “Business” and Announcements (if any)
- Lesson (presented to entire group)
- Small Group time
  - Discuss lesson and how it applies to us
  - Talk about other “important things” that the kids need to talk about
  - Challenge the kids to decide for themselves if God is right in what He says
  - Pray together for small group and for friends and other needs
- Come back together with large group for praise, snacks, and dismissal

## Working with Adults (18 Years Old and Older)

Working with adults can be very rewarding. Of all the age groups, they are the most likely to be able to study any part of the Bible and learn how to apply God's truths to their lives. **However, many adults** (especially new Christians) **know very little about the Bible**. So it is important to think about what your group already knows, and take them forward from there.

### ADULTS who are NEW CHRISTIANS

- Sometimes it is best to involve new Christians with helping in their children's classes
  - Hearing the Bible stories
  - Learning basic Bible truths
  - Learning to work with students and other teachers
  - Learning service to others
  - Showing God's love to others
  - It's good for the adults and for their children!
  - Pastor Darrell Fraley in his book "Children's Ministry: The Trust Building Business" says that "*Children's Ministry is the best basic discipleship method available in the church today.*" Not only for the child, but also for an adult working in children's ministry
  - Pastor Fraley also says, "*A children's Sunday School ministry that uses quality, published curricula, will provide a scope and sequence that will give an overview of the major highlights of the entire Bible. For adults new to the faith, this is vital to spiritual growth and faith development.*"
- Another option is to start a "New Members" class
  - Usually taught by the pastor or another staff member
  - Go over "basic beliefs" of Christianity and "doctrines" of the church
    - Salvation
    - Holy Spirit
    - Baptism
    - Communion
    - Body of Christ (the Church)
    - Gospel (or the Good News about Jesus)
    - Evangelism – Reaching Out to Others and telling them about Jesus
    - Spiritual Disciplines
      - Prayer, Reading the Bible, Giving (tithing)
- Or, start a class with New Christians to help them understand the Gospel message and how to tell others about it
  - Read Bible verses, sing praise songs, encourage one another
  - Talk about how God is working in your lives
  - Pray for each other, for you pastor, and for others in church and community
  - Show love to others

- Practice acts of kindness and service to others
- As you go along, read more about the Bible
- From time to time have your pastor come and talk to your class

### **ADULTS who are MATURE CHRISTIANS**

- Topics to Study
  - There are a myriad of topics available for adult classes to study
  - Some suggestions might include:
    - Reading through the Bible
    - Old Testament History: (Genesis, Exodus, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Samuel)
    - Gospels (stories of Jesus in New Testament) Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
    - Parables of Jesus (found in the Gospels)
    - Psalms and Proverbs (Wisdom literature and praise of God)
    - Church Instruction (Letters of Paul to the various churches in New Testament: Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Thessalonians, etc.)
    - Marriage, Raising Children
    - Salvation Message and How we are Saved (Romans and Hebrews)
    - The Early Church (Acts)
- Teachers for adult classes
  - Discuss curriculum choices with your pastor or church elders
  - Stay at least one lesson ahead of your class! ☺
  - Teach what you have learned
  - Teach what you know, so you can talk about your own experiences
    - Therefore the lessons are “real” to you and your students
  - Always have a Bible verse to back up your major points in your lesson
  - Don't teach your “opinions” unless they are upheld by a Bible verse
  - Remember that your opinions are not more important than what the Bible says
  - Try not to dwell on (or argue about) tiny details
  - Let class discussions be thoughtful
  - Try not to give out any misinformation
    - And try not to let it be given out in class by others
  - Never read the Bible? Start with the Old Testament stories (like the children do)
    - In that way you will learn about the character of God
    - You will also learn important lessons by studying the men and women of the Old Testament and how they related to God
    - Remember that God does not change, so He is the same now as then!

## Suggestions for Schedule during Class Time (Adult Classes)

- Welcome Time – talk, have refreshments (maybe coffee and pastries)
- Open with Prayer
  - Remember the sick, the elderly, and others in need
  - Thank God for being with you and ask Him to send His Holy Spirit to lead you into all truth about the lesson
- Business (if any)
- Lesson
  - Bible Reading
  - Teacher gives his/her thoughts
  - Short Discussion: What does this mean to us in our lives?
    - Look at the Bible verse again and ask yourselves:
      - Is there a lesson to learn?
      - Is there a command to obey?
      - Is there an example to follow?
    - Consider how you might put these things into action in your lives
  - Conclude Lesson
- Other Business/ Needs of Community: How can we help others/ show love to others?
- Close in Prayer
- Dismissal Time – talk, enjoy fellowship together, etc

## Other Things that you might want to Schedule during Class Time

- Offering
- Announcements
- Organizational Business
- Sign-up for Things (church activities, volunteer opportunities, and such)
- Discussions on How to Help Others (as a class or as individuals)
- Celebrations (birthdays, anniversaries, holidays)

## Starting a Sunday School (or Children's Ministry) in a Very Small Church

You know who you are! Perhaps there has never been a Sunday School at your church, and now there is one because you decided to start a group with the children. Great! Then this is for you!  
(*By the way... I am proud of you!*)

- One Adult to All of the Kids
  - Probably you are all by yourself with all of the kids of various ages in a class
  - First things first, you need someone to help you
  - I know... I know... you don't HAVE anyone to help you
  - But you still need someone. It's better for you and it's better for the kids.
  - Invite parents to help/participate
  - They will learn too!
  - Get some parents/ helpers to be in there with you, even if you do everything else!
    - They can help prepare/serve snacks
    - Take kids to the bathroom
    - Help supervise kids
    - Help you if you need something (and one day you will)
    - Besides, in this day and time, there must be more than one adult in a room
- Start by teaching the curriculum you have
- Work closely with the Pastor and Staff at your church
  - Discuss ideas for curricula, classroom space, materials needed, and other workers
  - Make sure you get your pastor to review your curriculum choices with you
- As more children begin coming to class
  - Train more teachers
  - Divide students into more than one group, based upon age
- Support and encourage other teachers
  - Discuss lessons among teachers ahead of time
    - You can meet together to do this
  - Make sure the teachers have the lessons, materials, and space they need to meet
  - Plan activities for special days/ holidays together (like for Easter & Christmas)
- Gradually begin to bring in other adults who have special gifts or talents to help out
  - They can come in from time to time, or on a regular basis – It's up to you!
  - Music person
  - Arts and Crafts person
  - People with special jobs/interests (policeman, fireman, doctor, pastor, artist )
  - People with great stories (missions, conversion, someone whom God has helped)
  - These folks can come in for short periods of time to interact with the children

- If there is a Youth Group (teenagers) in your church, speak with the leader of the Youth
  - Arrange “Big Buddy Days” where teens come to visit/ play games/ sing songs/ and hear stories with the young children in your group
  - This encourages Christian Fellowship in the church among the young people
  - Provides mentors for the young children, and a sense of service for the youth
- If there is no Youth Group, then the teens are probably already available to you!
- Involve the Teens in your group as teachers and helpers
- First teach the lesson to the teens (maybe as the little ones play or do activities)
  - Teach them the major points of the story
  - Teach them about the main Bible characters
- Then, involve the teens in telling the story to the younger children
  - Have them act out parts of the Bible story as you read it or tell it to everyone
    - They can be funny or serious
  - Ask them to pray (out loud) for the group
  - Ask them to lead games and activities
  - Ask them to learn how to do the craft and then show the children
  - After some practice, ask them to help teach the lesson one week! ☺
- There are many advantages to having the teens involved in your class in this way
  - The teens will learn the Bible lessons and the truths in them
  - The teens will learn the joy and importance of service to others
  - By taking on these roles, and being successful at them, the teens will begin to be looked upon as an important and integral part of the adult portion of the church. This will help them become more confident as they mature into adults.
  - Both the teens and the children will learn the joy of Christian fellowship.
  - The children will enjoy learning from the older kids (teens)
  - Everyone will have more fun!

# Teachers' Training 101

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*Are you called? Not on the phone. Are you led? Not by the nose.*

Thank you for participating in this Teachers' Training Program.

It is our prayer that it has helped you in some small way.

If you find that you benefit from it, we ask that you give God  
all the glory and honor for it.

For more information and Sunday School materials, please visit our website at:

[www.Sunday-School-Center.com](http://www.Sunday-School-Center.com)

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