

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? _____

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)? _____

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

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? _____

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

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!