

Evangelical Congregational Church

# So You're A... Sunday School Teacher



**S**o you are a Sunday School teacher: what a challenge; what an opportunity; what a responsibility! What an important role God has called you to fulfill in His plan! And perhaps the Apostle Paul had you in mind when he wrote, “Some of us have been given special ability...for caring for God’s people as a shepherd does his sheep, leading and teaching them in the ways of God...to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” (I Cor. 12:28 KJV; Eph. 4:12-13)

Teaching, of course, is not new to Christianity. “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching...” (Matt. 9:35). Before His ascension, He said to His followers, “Therefore, go and make disciples...and teach them to obey...” (Matt. 28:19,20). And the Apostle Paul wrote, “the things you have heard me say...entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (II Tim. 2:2).

### **Concerning the Challenge**

Teaching is **more** than just meeting once a week with a small group and telling them a Bible story. It is a construction business in which serious effort is made to build each student into a temple of the Living God. Teaching is a privileged ministry. As such, we should approach it with optimism, for it is God’s work; with enthusiasm, for it is the greatest work; and with integrity; for it is holy work (II Cor. 2:14-17).

Lesson preparation is vital in order for the teacher to know what he is teaching, who he is teaching, and to have the confidence to guide the learning experience. The Bible must be the very heart of the curriculum. It must be acceptable as the very Word of God, loved and respected. What it says must be put into language which will affect everyday experience. And its principles must be taught as foundational for life.

As a good Sunday school teacher you realize your ministry is one of caring and sharing. You have a God-given concern for others in the Body of Christ, and especially for those in your own class. Think of yourself as a “undershepherd”, responsible for the spiritual maturity of those you teach. This includes visiting members, taking a personal interest in what affect their lives, and showing compassion for their needs. Note also the importance of sharing the joys and blessings which come through serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

Confidence and ability in teaching are gained by,

1. a personal growth relationship with Jesus Christ. You must know of whom you speak.
2. A regular, disciplined prayer life. Evaluate your own spiritual condition, and ask God to quicken your mind to His truth. Ask, “what does God want me to say to my students?”
3. Personal, devotional Bible study. Ask questions like: who, what, when, where, why and how. Keep your pupils in mind.
4. Set a goal and develop a lesson plan or outline. Decide what needs to be emphasized, and what procedure to follow.
5. Organize your teaching aids, such as audio-visuals and discussion materials which will increase class participation.

And remember, teaching is a two way street. Avoid a monotonous lecture, for learning is an **active** process. It involves **participation** on the part of the students, either in a pre-planned or response activity. By pre-planned we mean using such teaching methods as role playing, panel discussion, reports, buzz-groups, etc. Response activities include looking up and reading Scripture passages, answering questions, or colloquy. (One caution, however, do not force participation.)

### **Concerning Opportunity**

Again, in the area of caring and sharing, who knows but that you could be the one person who can reach that student in your class for Jesus? In the early church, what attracted so many people to Christianity was not only that it was a living, demonstrable faith, but is offered mercy, hope, love and reconciliation to all men (II Cor. 4 and 5).

Seizing the opportunity means having a positive spiritual and moral influence on your students. Every one who enters your classroom will do so with a different set of values; with his own philosophy of life—whether it is meaningful or miserable; and each will have come from a different environment where the extremes of emotion may have been evident in just the previous hour. But now you have the privilege of focusing their attention the the One who is able to solve every problem, who has given us His Word that He is concerned about their needs, and who want them to understand that each experience in life is a road to spiritual maturity.

You may be the teacher of young children. Then thank God He has entrusted you with the opportunity of helping to mold their minds and attitudes. Teach them about God and His love. Let them know that Jesus was a very special person who is

infinitely interested in them. Encourage them to want to please Jesus. As the student matures, help him understand that God is the One who takes care of us, and that Jesus is the best Friend anyone can have. Teach them that Jesus died in our place.

Teenager can understand that God has always had a plan of redemption which includes the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection, and Second Coming of Christ. And, He has a plan for their lives as well. The teen should know that the Bible is our final authority in what we believe and how we live. How exciting to be able to help them accept themselves; to share with them some grand truth which they have discovered in God's Word; to open their spiritual eyes to the fact that Bible stories are a means of teaching Bible truths; and to encourage them to make a life-response to Jesus.

Adults, and especially young adults, need your encouragement to help them learn to discipline their own lives. With work, families, homes, etc., priorities may be rearranged. Therefore, you may have the unique opportunity to help them understand and apply such truths as, "But seek first his kingdom..." (Matt. 6:33). "A good name is more desirable..." (Prov. 22:1). And "Love is patient, love is kind..." (1 Cor. 13:4). Never forget, adults need love too!

### **Concerning Responsibility:**

It always goes hand-in-hand with privilege. The good Christian teacher always realizes he is working with God to move people from "lip-service" to "life-involvement". The "goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14) is spiritual maturity in Christ Jesus! It is achieved when a man or woman or young person is presented "perfect in Christ" (Col. 1:28). That is the work to which God has called you. Such responsibility involves three things: Prayer, Preparation, and Proclamation!

Preparation involves training to teach and preparation of each lesson. Your training is an on-going process that never really ends. Each Christian teacher will want to continue their own education so that they will be best equipped to teach God's Word. Weekly preparation then will not be "weakly" preparation but will be more effective and better meet the needs of each student.

The road will not be easy! But then, neither was that of our Lord. Yet, if you want an eternally satisfying work, you will "look around you (at the) vast fields of human souls (which) are ripening all around us" (John 4:35 LB). And you will say, "Lord, I'll go! Send me." (Isa. 6:8 LB). Then, as "God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain" (II Cor. 6:1).

God bless you as you accept the challenge, the opportunity, and the responsibilities of this ministry.

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