

T.E.A.C.H.

The Influence of Sunday School - Dan Harrison

Christian
Education
Department

A Sunday School teacher,
I do not know his name.
A wonderful preacher,
who never found fame.
So faithful, so earnest,
when I was a boy
He stuck to his task,
though I tried to annoy.
He never was missing,
in cold or in heat,
A smile his face lighted
the moment we'd meet.
He taught by example
as well as by word,
This splendid old teacher
who honored his Lord.
He helped my young life,
more than ever he knew.
Later years I remembered
and tried to be true.
I suppose he has gone now,
to join heaven's ranks
May it be my good fortune
someday to say, thanks.

Howard Mahle, in The Anchor

I have to agree with the author of the poem that the impact of Sunday School teachers on my life has been profound. As I began to reflect on some of these individuals I immediately thought of Esther Nelson, Audrey Young, Maxine Wilson and Margaret Maxwell. These were not the only teachers who touched my life, but they all impacted me in very memorable ways.

It has been documented that what goes on in Sunday School with children under the age of 10 is not "learning" in an academic sense. It doesn't especially matter what the teachers are formally teaching because **THEY** are the cur-

riculum. Studies reveal, for example, that children often have a totally mixed up idea of Moses crossing the Red Sea etc. The story made no logical sense and created no basis of faith per se. What the children did learn, however, was that the story of Moses crossing the Red Sea was important to the adult teacher. The sole value of the teaching event lay in the relationship between the child and the teacher. As students move into their adolescent years this is not as much the case as teens begin to critically evaluate what is presented to them.

Because the influence of the person teaching is such a critical issue in the lives of those being taught, it is very important that they live godly lives and convey accurate information. The following story conveys the fact that sometimes the facts get a little confused.

A young preacher who had never pastored was being interviewed by a committee who was considering him for the position of pastor. The chairman asked, "Son, do you know the Bible?" He said, "Yes, sir. I really know the Bible."

The chairman continued, "What part of the Bible do you know best?" The young man replied, "Well, I know the New Testament the best."

The chairman then said, "Tell us something you know about the New Testament. Tell the committee what you know about the prodigal son."

He said, "All right. There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, who went down to Jericho by night. And he fell upon stony ground and the thorns

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did choke him half to death. The next morning Solomon and his wife Gomorrah came by and carried him down to the ark and told Moses to take care of him. But as he was going thorough the eastern gate into the ark, he caught his hair on a limb, and he hung there 40 days and 40 nights. And he would afterwards hunger, but the ravens came and fed him. The next day the three wise men came and carried him down to the boat dock and he caught a ship to Nineveh. When he got there he found Delilah sitting on the wall. He said, 'Chunck her down, boys.' And they said, 'How many times shall we chunck her down?' 'Til 7 times ??' And he said, 'Nay, but 70 times 7,' and they chuncked her down 490 times. And she burst asunder in their midst. And they picked up 12 baskets of the fragments; and in the resurrection, who wife will she be?"

And the chairman said, "Fellows, I think we ought to call him. He's awful young, but he sure knows his Bible."

I am thankful for the foundation for my faith that was laid by conscientious Sunday School teachers. They clearly taught the truth of scripture but just as importantly they also provided a powerful example of how those truths were to be applied to daily life. I owe a debt of gratitude to those who selflessly poured themselves into my life during my childhood and adolescent years.

I know that it is impossible for me to fully appreciate the impact of Sunday School on my life but I know for certain that it has been both profound and eternal. I believe Sunday School is still a powerful tool today. I teach an adult class every week because I am convinced that biblical truth transforms lives and changes eternal destinies.

How has Sunday School impacted your life? How is your life being changed today because of your involvement?



QUOTES

Success is not measured by what you do compared to what others do, it is measured by what you do with the ability God gave you.

Zig Ziglar

Be absolutely clear about who you are and what you stand for. Refuse to compromise.

Brian Tracy

My Reflections of Sunday School

Dr. Dan Tipton

Reflections on Sunday school from the past carries me mostly to childhood experiences. It is not that adult Sunday school has not been useful and fruitful. It is simply that the early years seem to bear a more lasting impression.

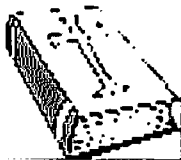
Perhaps it is best to differentiate between memory and impact. Memory records the experience. Impact is the results playing out across the years. The impact from Sunday school, and my Sunday school teachers, has been dramatic. Life shaping and lasting influence are not simple over statements. Both summarize my assessment from childhood years.

In those days the teaching methods and instructional materials were simple. Flannel graph, Sunday school papers, picture cards with a Bible story in small print on the back, and an occasional picture to color was about all there was. Generally the classrooms were small, often crowded, and maybe even somewhat spartan by today's standards. The teachers loved God and the kids. They didn't have a whole lot to work with. But, they did a powerful job. Their impact was wrought through something more than limited resources.

The goals were pretty well defined. Goals were placed before the student in very clear terms. Achievement of a goal was recognized and rewarded before the entire congregation. Actually, Sunday school in my home church was a rather brilliant strategy of teaching and modeling Biblical values, spiritual experience issues, all intertwined within acquisition of Biblical content. Memorization was a big thing. I couldn't have been more than five years of age when I stood in front of the entire congregation alone and quoted John 3:16, such as every other class member was expected to do. The reward was some trinket from our denomination bookstore. I felt it was as good as an Olympic gold medal. During the ensuing years I was there many more times, always on a Sunday evening, in front of everyone, reciting from memory some new Biblical item. Among the ones I remember were the Ten Commandments, books of the New Testament, books of the Old Testament, the 23rd Psalm, the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes. I also remember the pre-Sunday evening service, general content of the Bible quizzing with teams arranged by age levels. Much of this faded away by the time I was nearing junior high school. However, the success of saying all the books of the Old Testament in front of an applauding congregation when I was just a tyke was big stuff.

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It was not just big stuff to me; it was big stuff to a church full of Christian adults who were very intensely focused upon instilling into children the fundamentals of the faith.



If such are the memories, what was the impact of the Sunday school? Here things must be defined in terms of the teacher. Each one was the unifying person for the class. The classes all had the typical titles—Beginners, Primary,

Junior, etc. They were better known to the kids as Louell's class, or Sister Younkin's class or Sister Myer's class. The teachers were role models. What they taught was important. What they were, in fervency, in passion, and example was even more significant. The student never doubted the reality of the faith and spiritual experience. The object lesson of the role model was so very real.

It was in Sunday school where relationship and social skills were often first developed beyond the setting of home and family. Head start, day care and even kindergarten was not really thought of yet in my little town and rural context. Social skills were honed at church and Sunday school. It was not just kid-to-kid. Sunday school class and activities often provided a mix of all age levels.

The Sunday school environment produced another important outcome. Self-esteem soared. Self-confidence developed. The people of my church always treated the little ones like they were really somebody important. I felt wanted. I was affirmed. I felt competent. By eight years of age, I knew the pastor at times would call on me to pray over an offering or for dismissal prayer at the close of service. Of course, those kind of training issues were covered in Sunday school and the kids level of youth services. While the teaching and memory work were cognitive matters, the love and respect issues were affective matters.

It seems that most of what took place in Sunday school in those early years was very effective. If there were seminars training the Sunday school staff, I don't recall them. Rather, I believe that much of what was done, was done instinctively and intuitively. It was certainly effective. It was a whole church/team effort. Everyone cheered the progress of the young student. Sunday school never deteriorated into a babysitting service that merely gave parents a safe haven break in parental service. The student had a good time, but the entertainment aspect was the by-product, not a particular goal. The thought that a child could come to Sunday school, not learn much, but be successful if the child had a good time was not even a concept in those days. Outcomes were counted in terms of demonstration of gains in Biblical knowledge, testimonies of Christian experience, increased capacity to recite doctrinal concepts, and the implementation of primary church/faith based skills. That was the impact. It has born results for a long time in my life. May Sunday schools be so effective today.

If Not Sunday School, Then What?

by David Lattimer

For many years I have traveled among our churches representing Circleville Bible College and our General Missionary Department. Doing so I have witnessed a gradual decline in our Sunday schools. Too often, when scheduling a service at a church, I've been told to just arrive before 10:30 a.m. because we don't have much of a Sunday school.

A Chinese boy once hid in the attic of a church near the University of Chicago. He had no money and did not know where to go for food and housing. He never left the building. The leftovers from church functions provided food. From the attic he heard the voices of people, the choir and the pastor's sermons, but feared to reveal his physical presence. 1



How many hungry people attend our churches every Sunday, only to miss the Bread of Life? How many are aching to share unmet needs, and somehow never get the chance?

Almost every major movement of spiritual renewal in church history has included a return to small groups meeting for Bible study, prayer and discussion of faith. 2 The New Testament church was the church in the home, an intimate small group meeting.

There are many behaviors commanded in Scripture which are lost to the church when it does not meet with sufficient frequency, intimacy and commitment to let them develop. Consider the following Scriptures, which are particularly pointed in this connection.

1. Gal. 6:2 Bear one another's burdens.
2. Phil. 2:4 Be concerned for each other's interests.
3. Col. 3:16 Teach and admonish one another.
4. Rom. 12:15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.
5. I Thess 5:11 Encourage one another and build each up.
6. Heb. 10:24-25 Encourage one another.
7. James 5:16 Confess your faults to one another.

These commandments demand much more than worshipping together or having casual relationships.

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"Why Sunday School Works for Me" Pastor Dave Hopkins

When I was asked this question my mind went back to the time I got saved over 33 years ago. Not having been raised in church and knowing almost nothing about the Bible and the things of God, my heart had been changed so dramatically that I immediately had a deep desire to know more about God and His word. I found that Sunday school was a tremendous place to learn about what the Bible had to say to me. Looking back I realize that the Bible was speaking to me personally and helping me to grow in scripture knowledge and understanding.

Our problem in church today is that people treat it as a smorgasbord to pick and choose what service to go to. By choosing not to attend Sunday school class they miss out on not only learning about God's word but also valuable fellowship with other Christians. Sunday school works for me because I wanted to know more about what the Bible said about how to live my Christian life and how to conduct myself as a Christian. You can see a difference in how people who attend and those who don't live their Christian lives. Sunday School has had a major impact on my life and "I know it works for me." God bless the dedicated Sunday School Teachers who study and pray for their classes. If you will give it a chance Sunday School will work for you.

The Challenges of Leading Sunday School by Roy Hill, Winchester C&C U.S.S. Supt.

Things have gotten lots more complicated these days. Sunday School is no exception. In order to explain some of the challenges, I will use the example of a good news article. It should answer the questions, who, what, when, where and why.

I will start with the last question first. Why do we teach Sunday School? Sunday School is not babysitting or keeping kids entertained while their parents are in class. The first priority of Sunday School is to see that each student has a personal saving experience with Jesus Christ. After that, we are to assist believers in understanding God's word and applying it to their daily lives. One is never too young or too old to increase their knowledge of the scriptures even though the delivery method and depth must be adjusted to the age and ability level of the learner. The tendency with young children is to underestimate their level of comprehension. They can often understand and apply Bible truths that can confound adults. On the other hand, senior citizens can find new meaning in the scriptures, no matter how many times they may have read and studied them.

Today's Sunday School learners are growing up in a totally different era than those from earlier times. They come to church from an environment rich in electronic gadgets and instant feedback. Children through young adults have been around computers, electronic games, fax machines, cell phones and other devices most of their lives. They are used to accessing volumes of information with a few keystrokes. They are also accustomed to highly sophisticated marketing techniques designed to influence their thinking process and sway their opinions. We must take this into account when planning lessons or we can bore them into not coming back. We also have children in church today with significant issues such as fetal alcohol syndrome, ADD, ADHD and other conditions that can hamper their ability to learn and/or cause them to disrupt other students who want to learn.

The other side of the coin is whom do we have teaching our classes. In the good old days, everyone knew about everyone else in the church. Today, people are more mobile than they have ever been before. As a result, we must be careful to properly screen workers. The headlines far too often describe people in positions of trust who commit serious crimes on innocent victims. Many larger churches have started running criminal background checks on workers as a precaution. Although this is not a guarantee, it is a show of good faith to put only reputable people in classrooms.

The third challenge is what do we teach. As stated above, we are dealing with a different generation than just a few years ago. It is critical that we remain true to our doctrine while at the same time making the information relevant to each student. This is a tall order. There are lots of canned programs and curriculum on the market. Our task is to screen for ideologies or concepts that clash with our denomination or have gaps in areas our students need. Most of the larger publishers provide enrichment materials on CD, DVD, videotape or on websites. Again, it must be tailored to each teacher's individual needs.

A good rule of thumb for a lesson is to fill it with OIL. That means first to have an Objective for the lesson. Second, allow students to Interpret the objective in their own words. Third, the lesson should have a Life Application for each student.

Considerable thought must also be given to sensitive subjects such as alternative lifestyles and tolerance. The Bible is very clear on some of these issues but not on others. It is wise to clear any teaching materials on potential controversial subjects with church leadership before using them in the classroom.

The next challenge is when do we teach. In growing churches, space is always at a premium.

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As a result, some creative time schedules have been developed for Sunday school. One solution is to run multiple sessions.

This means that if the church offers more than one worship service, part of the Sunday school classes can meet during one service and the learners switch places for the next service.



This allows more efficient use of space. Other churches have started having part of their Sunday school classes meet on Sunday night prior to service or even another night of the week. Any changes such as these should be thoroughly studied and clearly communicated to the congregation before implementation.

Closely tied to the time issue is where do we teach. If classes become crowded, the tendency is to squeeze out space anywhere we can. Rooms designed for storage or mechanical systems are often pressed into service as classrooms. This can pose health and safety issues as well as a very unpleasant atmosphere for learning. Our goal is to get them into the church, not run them off. Several options exist for temporarily solving the space issue. One is to reschedule the time, as stated above. Another is to explore temporary space in schools or other suitable buildings in close proximity to the church. A good, but often very expensive option is to add onto the existing building or build a new one. Make sure to check local and state codes before undertaking this step.

In closing, there are lots of challenges facing leaders of Christian Education today. Fortunately, each problem brings new opportunities. So long as we pray about it and follow God's word, the end result will be growth in the church and the Kingdom of God.

Sunday School
by Don Spurgeon

I recall many years ago as a small child going to Sunday school. It was the regular program of our family. I was taken to Sunday school and church for the first time when I was only a few days old. We lived on a farm most of my childhood years and Sunday was not a whole lot different from any other day except we all knew that on Sunday we would be going to Sunday school as a family and of course we stayed for worship. Sunday afternoons were for rest, relaxation and visiting grandparents. Sunday evenings we would be going back to church for evening service.



A part of the daily activity of our house whether on Sunday or any other day, involved the starting of the day with family devotions, mom making a good breakfast and the chores had to be done before we all left the house. In the evening before

went to bed, the family would gather again for a time of prayer. I am most grateful for that kind of a childhood influence on my life that served as a foundation for the future years of my life and ministry.

I grew up going to smaller churches and the Sunday school teacher that probably made the most impact on my life was my own father. I had the advantage of watching him all during the week when he would spend time studying the lesson. He always wanted to give the best during the lesson time to students in the class. He was my Sunday school teacher both in elementary, junior high and on into my teen years. There were a few other teachers in between but it seemed that they kept having my dad move up with the class. In those earlier years there was some type of craft to take home. I can still see him, as he would help every child to complete their take home project.

In addition to the Sunday class time we had regular Sunday school class parties. Each time dad and mom would get at least one other couple to assist them with planned activity. All of us looked forward to these class parties with lots of various fun activities.

If I had to wrap it up in a summary statement about Sunday school teachers and how it positively affected my life, I would simply say just knowing that our teacher loved us and that we were very important at every age. Every student was needed to help our church continue to grow and develop as a healthy church.

The Lord's Army



A friend was in front of me coming out of church one day, and the preacher was standing at the door as he always is to shake hands. He grabbed my friend by the hand and pulled him aside. The pastor said to him, "You need to join the Army of the Lord!"

My friend replied, I'm already in the army of the Lord, Pastor."

The Pastor questioned, "How come I don't see you except at Christmas and Easter?"

And with a totally straight face, he whispered back, I'm in the Secret Service."

Christian Education Department

Christian Education Department
P.O. Box 356
Winchester, Ohio 45697

Phone: (937) 695-0655
Fax: (937) 695-0388
e-mail: cedept@sbcglobal.net
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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Mouth-to-mouth communication is expressed in phases like, "How are you?" and "Oh, I'm fine." It is superficial and does little more than acknowledge the presence of others. Head-to-head communication involves the communication of ideas from one person to another. Such is important, but it involves persons only on the level of ideas or concepts. Only heart-to-heart communication involves the total person, including the deepest feelings. This is the kind of sharing that the New Testament word "Koinonia" describes and it is only done with a small number of people. 3

The argument that John Wesley employed for such groups was simple: "While such groups are not prescribed in Scripture, a level of Christian lifestyle is prescribed which fails to materialize without some form of small group structures." 4

If we do not meet this need through Sunday School classes, then what? We dare not neglect these commands.

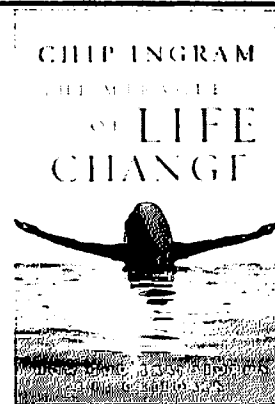
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