

## BEING INTENTIONAL ABOUT OUTREACH THROUGH SUNDAY SCHOOL

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Many people have come to hear the gospel for the first time and have been incorporated into the body of Christ—the church—because someone cared enough to invite them to Sunday School. Nevertheless, for it to reach its full potential as a tool for evangelism, it is important to be intentional in your approach to outreach through Sunday School. Being intentional means that you think through and develop objectives, plans and approaches that can be utilized to make God’s mission a part of everything that you do.

The first step is to *prioritize*. While the idea of reaching other children and families with the gospel through your Sunday School may sound self-evident, intentionally putting the outreach aspect of Sunday School “front and center” every step of the way will remind all involved—teachers, helpers, and students—that the word of God you are studying is meant for all.

Next, it is important to *plan*. This means that you will go through a process that organizes your activities, lessons, special events, etc., around the objective of reaching out to those who do not know the love of Christ.

*Preparation* is fundamental to assure that teachers, especially, understand that a large part of what you want to do as a Sunday School is to communicate the gospel to those who have not heard it. This means also providing training on how to articulate the basics of the Christ faith clearly, remembering that not all of the participants—both children and adults—will correctly understand some of the terminology we inside the church frequently use. Preparation includes helping the Sunday School teachers, staff and students to welcome those who may be visiting for the first time, balancing careful attention to the newcomers, without overwhelming them or making them feel conspicuously uncomfortable.

Of course, if you want to open up your Sunday School to the community, it is necessary to *publicize*. This can be done in a variety of ways, such as mass media like newspaper adds or radio spots, but it can include more personal approaches, like delivering invitations to people’s homes. One Sunday School prepared a little half sheet invitation for every Sunday to be given to the staff and students so they could personally hand it to their friends. The sheet not only contained the invitation to Sunday School, but also provided a brief description of next Sunday’s lesson, special activities, etc., so potential students and parents could know ahead of time something about the lessons that would be covered.

In all of this, it is necessary to *provide* the kinds of resources the teachers and helpers will need. That may be things like extra lesson booklets, Bibles, paper, pencils, or copies of the Catechism, so that a visitor will feel like a part of the group. It also may be necessary to provide other resources, like desks, chairs, whiteboards, maps of the world of the Bible, or any other aid that will help the teacher do his or her job better.

*Pursue* has to do with follow-up. If you have a visitor, be sure the pastor or some other member of the Sunday School staff follows up on that visitor or her family. Personal follow up demonstrates the love of Christ by showing that you and your congregation care about the visitor (see previous article *Follow Up Key . . .*).

Being intentional about outreach through your Sunday School is a matter of carefully and consciously remembering, every step of the way, your objective of having

the opportunity to share the love of Christ. By putting that objective in the forefront, your Sunday School can reach out to your community in ever more significant ways.

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