

# **Simpler Solutions for Successful Sabbath Schools**

## **Goals for Workshop**

- Understanding reasons for Children's Sabbath School
- Understanding how simple planning and organisation can help teachers, children, parents and the future church
- Discovering what helps you to be an organised and successful teacher
- Planning for successful Sabbath Schools
- Finding other resources to support your ministry
- Thinking wider – planning family, multi-age and outreach events throughout the year

*What is the purpose of Sabbath School? List at least 5 reasons why we have children's Sabbath school classes:*

1

2

3

4

5

List other reasons mentioned by the group:

*Number the above reasons in order of importance as you see them (1 being most important)*

## **Why do we need to plan ahead?**

- Best practice
- Respectful and kind to children
- Respectful and kind to us as teachers
- Children have a more positive experience of being taught - happier
- We have a more positive experience of teaching – we are happier and the children sense this
- We feel more relaxed on the day
- Teaching is seamless and smoother
- We maintain interest and authority

- We provide a richer experience because we have everything we need to teach the children and accommodate their varied learning styles
- Children less likely to be distracted by our hesitation and rummaging
- Sabbath is more of a Sabbath and less stressed
- If we are ready for our class then we can accommodate last minute home emergencies, etc and still provide a quality classroom experience
- Organised planning and storage can make it easier for other teachers to teach the class in the future
- Any other ideas?

*What have you just heard that is new to you and that will encourage you to do something different in your own planning?*

## **How Can We Plan Ahead?**

*Form groups of 2-3 people and make a list of all the planning tips you can think of.*

*Write them down so we can copy and share them with the rest of the group.*

## **Planned teaching**

- Read the lessons as far ahead as possible.
- Read the introduction to the lesson book – many teachers are too busy to read this and yet it has lots of helpful and useful information.
- It is a good idea to sit and read a quarter or a month in one sitting to give you an overview of your needs.
- Mark the activities you will use with sticky-notes sticking out from the pages.
- Chose a good range of activities so that all the children's learning styles and needs are met – not just what you would like to do - as this may exclude some children from enjoying the class and from learning in the ways that work best for them.
- Make lists of what you will need.

## **One way to use lists to help you**

Divide a page into three columns and make the following lists:

- **Items I need to buy**
  - Try and buy as much as possible in one trip so you save time and you are focussed and can compare prices, etc.
  - Pound shops – cheap and often unusual items that can be useful in Sabbath school.
  - IKEA – fabrics to cheer up the space – cheap fleece throws (£2-3) can be quickly stitched to make Bible costumes, animal finger puppets, household 'helping' toys, bright paper for crafts, storage and appropriate seating and furniture, etc – check online first to save a wasted trip.
  - Try charity shops for animals and small toys etc and even Bible story books. (Check safety of all items and appropriate age usage.)
- **Items I can ask other church members to donate or lend**
  - Make a list of items that you need for the quarter and circulate it amongst members – some are happy to help you, or to pass on things they don't need.
  - Let them know what you need and when you need it.
  - Ask for items to be given to you 2 weeks in advance so you can check they will be suitable and so you can find alternatives if necessary.
  - Return borrowed items promptly and safely.
  - Make a note of who provided the item in case it is needed again in the future.
- **Items I need to find in my own house, etc.**
  - Many lessons require simple things you will have around the house anyway – have a handy box with a list of what's required and add the things you need to the box at least 1 week ahead if possible so that you can check you have everything together.

Use these three lists to help you gather your supplies.

- **Items I need to copy and cut out, etc.**

- Mark these with sticky yellow notes in the lesson book or other resource books.
- Try to copy a month or quarter in advance – the more you do in one go, the more time you will save yourself.
- Some crafts are best copied onto thin card, which is sturdier and easily obtained from large stationers. (Staples, WHS, Rymans, etc)
- Organise the copies into plastic sleeves (or a drop file) and note the lesson number on the outside together with any other requirements, such as glue-sticks, scissors, split-pins, staples, etc.
- Ask people to help save you time by cutting out crafts for younger children while they are watching TV, or ask a shut-in older person who still has agile fingers.

### **Planning for the week ahead**

- Keep a large box or bag that everyone knows is for Sabbath School and add the things you need for the week ahead
- By Tuesday night – check you have everything you need.
- Read through the lesson.
- Decide which bits of programme you will use so that all children's learning needs are met.
- Ask yourself – What is the most important message in the lesson? What are the most effective ways of getting that message across to the different children in my class, especially the one that seems the hardest to reach? How can I show the children God's love through the way I teach and interact with them?

### **Audit your room for neatness and attractiveness**

- If Jesus was going to come to your class next week, what would you want to do to the room during the week?
- What message does the decor give the children?
- Does the room contain people's cast off furniture, or tables and chairs that are not at the best height for children?
- How bright and welcoming does the room look?
- Do other users respect the space?
- How can your church let its children know that their needs are important?

### **Audit your resources**

- Are your resources neat and tidy and organised?
- Why are you keeping what you are keeping?
- What is the best way to store class supplies?
- Can you and the children easily find what you need?
- What needs to be thrown away or given away?

- What else does your class need?

## **Praying for the Children in Your Class**

As a Sabbath School teacher you have a special place in God's work and a vital evangelistic ministry.

Here is a selection of creative ways to stimulate your reflecting on the prayers for the children in your church. Choose one method that excites you and helps you to pray for the children you teach?

### **ACTS of prayer**

- Adoration - Praise God for this child! What, specifically, has God done in this child's life that inspires your praise?
- Confession - Do you have any attitudes, thoughts or biases relating to this child that you need to confess to God?
- Thanksgiving - Thank God for the child. List the many different qualities and gifts of the child for which you want to thank God.
- Supplication - What specific prayer requests do you have for this child? What specific prayer requests do you have for yourself as a teacher of this child?

### **Other ways to pray for children**

- Create a calendar so that in your personal prayer times you are praying for one specific child each week.
- Each day pray for one of the following areas of their life.
  1. Pray for the development of the child's personal relationship with our loving God.
  2. Pray for their family.
  3. Pray for the child's school and learning environment and their teachers.
  4. Pray for their relationships with their friends.
  5. Pray for the child's future – education, friends, health, direction, spirituality.
  6. Pray for a special need you know that the child has.
  7. Pray that the child will learn something special about God in church this week.

### **Written prayers**

- Write out personalized prayers for each of the children in your class and give them the prayers to keep.
- If you are able to do so, create attractive prayer cards on your computer, which you can print off and send. Or mail prayers written in a store bought card or on a post card. Children love to get their own letters!

- Send prayers by email. Visit [www.dayspring.com](http://www.dayspring.com) for free e-cards that you can send to any of the children that have email addresses. More and more children have their own addresses, or their parents do, and children love to receive emails. [www.dayspring.com](http://www.dayspring.com) has an exciting range of inspirational animated and musical e-cards for children.

### **Praying in class**

- Encourage the children to bring their ongoing prayer requests and needs to the class for prayer.
- Gather the children in a circle and move around the group, placing your hand on each child's shoulder as you pray a sentence prayer especially for him or her.

### **Other ideas**

- Create your own alphabet of God's characteristics and use these to inspire your praise and enrich your relationship with Him. Start by thinking of as many qualities of God as you can that begin with each letter of the alphabet, and then use these to inspire your worship and Bible study, as well as your prayers for the children in your class. For example – if you were reflecting on God's quality of generosity, how could you help the children in your class experience God's generosity through your teaching?
- Create a prayer network between the children's class teachers to support each other in prayer and to pray for the work of the children's ministry team.
- Invite parents of the children in your church to a special time of prayer, or prayer breakfast, once a quarter.

### **Organising for the Future**

- Always pass on useful materials you have received during your time of office – they are intended for your church and cannot always be re-supplied.
- Keep one section for shared resources that every teacher needs to access.
- Store ideas and resources in simple to use retrieval systems
- Store materials and materials able to be photo copied, by class and lesson so that teachers can find them in the future. Use drop files or even ring binders with clear punched pockets.
- Whenever you have time, add to a resource file to make it easier for future teachers.
- For beginners – think of using 24 storage boxes labelled with the 24 lessons and keep materials, toys and teaching aids in the boxes for future years – this will save hours of time and make it easier for other people to feel confident taking the class. Collect the items as you go and let people

know what you need to fill each box – or give different people a box and a list and ask them to fill it with the appropriate items to help you.

Restaurants that serve ice cream often have lidded 10 litre plastic boxes that they are happy to give to you.

- Extend this to other classes, but perhaps keep animals in one box, Bible costumes in another, musical instruments in another etc.

### **Oops! I wasn't ready! – Ideas for last minute panics!**

However prepared you are people are sick, or forget, or don't turn up and it is good to have something you can do in a hurry with very little preparation.

### **Younger children - Godly play approach**

([www.godlyplay.org.uk](http://www.godlyplay.org.uk)) Wondering questions and free-style crafts

After you have told the Bible story ask these questions and give plenty of time for children to 'wonder' aloud and discuss their ideas openly and without judgment. Accept their ideas warmly however inventive or wayward.

- I wonder what you liked best in the story? (Easy, question with no wrong answers – ice-breaker)
  - I wonder what is the most important thing in the story? (Value question)
  - I wonder where you are in the story? (Personalised, applied question)
  - I wonder what we could leave out of the story and still have all the story we need? (Shows that whole Bible story is useful and relevant)
- 
- Then supply lots of craft materials that are attractive, good quality, neat, and tidy.
  - Ask the children to make whatever they want in response to God after the story they have just heard.
  - These things are their spiritual response between the children and God and not to be used for 'show and tell'. They are like their private meditations.
  - Give them a place to keep what they made safe, or let them take it home, and tell them how much you enjoyed having them in your class today.

### **Mini-books**

Learn how to make a quick mini-book and then invite the children to create their own picture book to tell the Bible story of the week. Google for ideas and make some today.

## **Telling stories**

- Slow the Bible story right down and look at every detail you can, helping the children to make the noises, imagine the smells, think of what they would feel if they were in the story, mime actions etc. This can help them to think about the story in closer detail and to remember it more clearly.
- Give each child one of the characters in the story and ask them to imagine what they were thinking, feeling and doing at different times in the story.

## **Older children - DIY Bible game**

- For older children (10+) break them into two groups and give one group last week's lesson story and one group this week's lesson story.
- Use the [www.dltk-bible.com/sslgame.htm](http://www.dltk-bible.com/sslgame.htm) game board and cards and let each group create a quiz game for the other group and then swap boards and questions to play each other's game.
- Print this off as soon as you can and keep it handy!

## **Instant Bible guessing games**

- Blindfold children and ask them to draw something from the Bible for others to guess.
- Give them play dough and ask them to make something from the Bible or a Bible scene for others to guess.
- Or ask them to tear a piece of paper to illustrate something from the Bible for others to guess.

## **Sabbath School lessons and helpful websites**

[www.childmin.com](http://www.childmin.com) – North American Division CM website

[www.secadventist.org/dept/resources/Children%20Ministries](http://www.secadventist.org/dept/resources/Children%20Ministries) – lots of ideas and resources to print

[www.kidsministryideas.com](http://www.kidsministryideas.com) – SDA children's ministry ideas and web resources with lots of useful links

[www.ssnet.org](http://www.ssnet.org) – lessons website

## **Craft resources**

[www.bakerross.co.uk](http://www.bakerross.co.uk) – fast delivery, huge choice, designed for children and teachers, easy to cost out, reasonable quality, will happily send you catalogues.



[www.orientaltrading.com](http://www.orientaltrading.com) – then click 'craft and hobby' and then the Sunday School/VBS link - brilliant range of cheap and attractive craft kits. Check suitability for SDA and age group etc. Cannot order online – need to call them from UK and fax through your order. Will only send catalogues to UK when included with an order. Fast delivery – about a week. Take care – maybe import taxed. But educational materials may be exempt. Or ask US friends to receive the order and repackage to you as a gift or bring in their suitcases. Website may give you ideas that you can adapt, etc.

[www.mssscrafts.com](http://www.mssscrafts.com) – created by an SDA mother in Australia. Lots of links to other websites with printable resources for most lessons – search via lessons or Bible stories.

[www.lightlive.org](http://www.lightlive.org) – free registration, use search 'lightlive' tab for activities via themes, objects, Bible stories etc, lots of ideas for prayers, activities, telling stories, etc. Can download pdf files and print off full colour activity sheets for all ages if you have enough ink!

[www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk](http://www.barnabasinchurches.org.uk) – go to 'ideas' and find ideas for stories, prayers, dramas and other activities under different headings.

[www.dltk.com](http://www.dltk.com) – website of educational materials but also has a Bible section with fun and useful ideas.

Palm Tree Press publish a range of reproducible books full of easy to use worksheets on different topics. Karen Holford has some masters you can copy for your own churches if you wish.

The BUC produce packs of worksheets and crafts providing one activity per week for Beginners, Kindergartens and Primaries. There is a small fee for these to cover expenses. Order from the BUC Children's Ministries website. We are also hoping to have a set for the Scottish Mission which you can borrow to copy for yourselves. Jane Walton has also produced a similar set.