

Numerous churches have Sunday School because they have always had Sunday School. For many, this provides the only justification they need to continue. But real leaders need more. They want to do more than just *have* Sunday School, they want to *use* Sunday School to see “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” An effective Sunday School needs three essentials in place.

1. Strategy

Strategy is having a plan. A Sunday School with no plan becomes strangely devoted to practicing daily acts of trivia. When Jesus came to earth, He had a plan. In fact, the plan was made before the foundation of the earth. Jesus’ plan is seen in Matthew 4:23 and Matthew 9:35. He was here to *reach people*, *teach people*, and *minister to people*. I believe that individual Christians ought to do what Jesus did. After all, the word Christian means a “little Christ.” But I want to carry that thought one step further – a Christian organization (Sunday School) ought to do what Jesus did. Therefore, the strategy to

reach people

,

teach people

, and

minister to people

is a biblical strategy. Strategy takes an organization from striving to thriving. By focusing on these three “Jesus tasks” we can move our Sunday School from just existing to being effective.

2. Structure

Strategy must ride on the rails of structure. Without structure the strategy is easily swayed off track. Structure undergirds the strategy in three vital ways.

Structure provides organization. We have heard people say that they don’t like “organized religion.” Well, what’s the alternative – “disorganized religion.” Organization is not a by-word. Christianity is more than a “feel good” religion; it is a “mind religion.” Therefore, we must have more going on in Sunday School than just feeling good. C.S. Lewis said, “God is no fonder of intellectual slackers than any other slackers. If you are thinking of becoming a Christian, I warn you, you are embarking on something which is going to take the whole of you – brains and all.” As Sunday School leaders we must think through the needed organization to help the ministry accomplish her purpose.

Structure provides details. Structure understands the strategy and puts it in details. It has been said that the devil is in the details, but this I know – nothing becomes dynamic until it first becomes specific! Without details Sunday School tends to gravitate toward unproductive tasks. The ministry finds itself doing small and unimportant things in an effort to justify its existence. Thus, we continually perpetuate an on-going cycle of status quo. Our engine is all revved up but the car goes no where.

Structure provides repetition. Now, I know this seems boring, traditional, and uncreative. I am not advocating any of that. But perfection depends on repetition. How do you learn to play the piano? Throw a curveball? Memorize scripture? Teach students? The only way to get good is to repeat the activity necessary to develop your skill. Structure accommodates the needed repetition which accommodates perfection.

Is your Sunday School classes structured to accomplished the tasks and vision of your Sunday School ministry?

3. Scoreboard

Milton Friedman (1912-2006) said, “One of the great mistakes is to judge policies and programs by their intentions rather than their results.” Wow, what a great statement! Sunday School is guilty! Our good intentions cause us to feel good about our ministry even if we are not seeing any results. If *reaching people*, *teaching people*, and *ministering to people* are important then each task should be measured. Businesses have bottom lines. Schools have report cards. Sports events have scoreboards. Sunday Schools have good feelings about our good intentions. Our eternal mission beckons us to measure and evaluate our ministry.