

Here I Am! Send Me!

Sharing the Gospel in Sunday School

Grades 1-5

Presented by Mary Austin Jones & Tiffany Pierce

1. Why Teach Sunday School?

Mary Austin's Teaching Testimony (see attachment)

- Why did you say "YES" to teach Sunday School?
- Who encouraged you to teach Sunday School?
- Who could you invite to teach Sunday School?

2. Sunday School - What an Opportunity!

Sunday School is an opportunity to live out God's calling for us as believers:

TO GO and MAKE DISCIPLES!

(Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15)

By making disciples, we are cultivating and growing a relationship with the children in our class to ultimately share THE GOSPEL with them.

Jesus modeled this with his disciples in the New Testament and we need to IMITATE how Jesus developed relationships with his followers.

In Lifeway Research study *Flip the Script*, the best Sunday School teachers are not those who teach with the most authority, accuracy or excellence, but instead those who take a personal interest in the children or students they teach (Peters 66).

Write notes, send birthday cards, get to know the children in your class on a personal level.

- How can you better connect with children in your Sunday School class?

Teachers must make an intentional effort to connect with all children who walk through the door of our classrooms.

We will have children who fall in the following categories:

CONSISTENT ATTENDERS

NEWCOMERS

INCONSISTENT ATTENDERS

UNCHURCHED

What an opportunity we have to share the Gospel with such a diverse group! Teachers must create a classroom culture that welcomes ALL types of attendees and connects with them. We want children to desire to return to Sunday School consistently and move the inconsistent attendees and newcomers from an OUTSIDER to an INSIDE CONTRIBUTOR (Peters 52).

Be mindful to use language that is UNDERSTANDABLE for all attendees. Teachers should not assume children already have a biblical foundation nor are familiar with key Bible stories.

3. Relationship Building

It is important to build community and connect with children in your Sunday School Class. Oftentimes, children come from a variety of schools and do not know one another. They may be an infrequent attender or they simply may not have any friends in your class.

Children need four types of relationships to feel connected to the church and to feel like they belong (Peters 57):

Friends - Church should be a place where children find friends. Children need to have friends at church and to have opportunities and activities to foster friendships. Lifeway Research study *Nothing Less*, states that children and students who had a best friend who influenced them to follow Christ while growing up had a higher score of spiritual maturity as adults (Magruder 50). This means they continued to grow in their faith journey and were more likely to stay actively involved in church as adults.

Leaders - Adult leaders are vitally important to build relationships with children, to celebrate with them and to notice when they are absent.

Influencers- This includes the broader faith community at church such as invested adults and older kids that act as leaders, volunteers, greeters, etc.

Pastors - Children need to know their pastors as more than a person on a platform preaching on Sunday.

By intentionally incorporating “Get to Know You Activities” within your class time each week, you are growing a relationship with each child with the ultimate goal of sharing the Gospel with them.

Name Game (See Resource Packet p. 3) - Children in our class love to participate in the Name Game. We draw one name from a bag each week and that child comes to the front of the room to answer five questions about themselves. Afterwards, other children in class can ask them a question.

Pastor/ Influencer/ Leader - We love to include Pastors, Influencers and Leaders in the Name Game. Many children are not familiar with their Pastor or other Leaders on a personal level and this helps build a connection for future Gospel conversations between child and pastor.

- Who could you include in “Get to Know You Activities” at your church to help children build relationships?

Names of Jesus (See Resource Packet p. 4-8) - We transition to the Names of Jesus after the Name Game has been thoroughly exhausted. We have a paper chain with the Names of Jesus and the scripture reference. We draw a child's name; they tear one of the links from the chain and read the verse citing Jesus' name. This further reinforces the character/name of Jesus and His purpose as Savior and Redeemer. It's fun to use these names as we pray each week.

4. Dedicated Gospel Presentation

Scheduling - We begin the Sunday School year in August. We use August to familiarize ourselves with the children in our class, establish routine and emphasize the importance of bringing their Bibles. We begin our Gospel Presentation using a Gospel Storyboard in September, take a break for December and resume from January to February. This schedule leads up to Easter when children will revisit it again and leads into summer when they will hopefully attend a VBS and hear the Gospel presented once more.

- Think about when your Sunday School year begins; when is the best time to begin a Gospel Presentation? Map out a tentative schedule for the year.

Pacing - We present 1 truth from “The Gospel: God's Plan for Me” per month. This allows children time to process each truth, ask questions, and we can review each week and dig deeper into each truth. Also, if a child is absent for one week, they will not miss one of the truths.

Timing - Find a consistent time during your class when ALL children are present, are not arriving late or leaving early and are best able to pay attention. For us, it is after the weekly Bible lesson because we have several that consistently arrive late.

- When is the best time during your class to have a Gospel Presentation?

Bible Incentive Program (See Resource Packet p.1) - We have a “Bring your Bible” chart in our class to reward children for their efforts. We begin this in August and hope to establish good habits that will continue throughout the year. They receive a sticker each week for bringing their Bibles and will be rewarded a piece of candy after five weeks. Children will use their Bibles in class each week for the lesson and Gospel Presentation.

Use your Bible! (See Resource Packet p.1) - Use your Bible to look up verses. Children should know:

“The Bible is God’s Word to us and everything it says is TRUE, TRUE, TRUE!”

All children use the same version of the Bible, *One Big Story Bible*, CSB.

Teachers use large bookmarks with the picture symbol for each Gospel truth **(See Resource Packet p. 9-10)**.

Children follow along by looking verses up in their Bibles and highlight key verses they can memorize and revisit again.

Curriculum - Lifeway’s “The Gospel: God’s Plan for Me”

Poster (See Resource Packet p.1) - To be posted in your classroom throughout the year for teaching and review

Motions - Use motions to teach each truth from “The Gospel: God’s Plan for Me”

Communicate with Parents (See Resource Packet p.1) - Parents need to know children are going over the Plan of Salvation in Sunday School so they can continue Gospel conversations at home. Send home “The Gospel: God’s Plan for Me Pamphlet” so children and parents can review key truths.

5. Going Further

Younger Kids (Grades 1-2)



Gospel Keychain (See Resource Packet p. 2 and p. 11)

Updated from the classic VBS Gospel bracelet, with fun beads, and sheet to accompany it. This keychain is a demonstrative that we put together as a class. Children locate one bead at a time, we discuss what it means, review the verse that supports each truth, and color the sheet to accompany each truth. Children will retell a classmate what each bead symbolizes and will be encouraged to take it home and share its meaning with others. We hope children will put these on their backpacks and share the meaning with others at school.

Gospel in a Box (See Resource Packet p. 12) - Use Gospel in a Box to teach children truths from “The Gospel: God’s Plan for Me.” Reveal one item per Gospel truth, read the corresponding verse and discuss what it means. This can also be used as a review tool to reinforce what each element represents.



Older Kids (Grades 3-5)

Gospel Connection - Much like “The Bible Recap’s” God Shot...Ask children if they can think of a Gospel Connection from the lesson each week. Reference the poster and relate the lesson back to a Gospel truth. Each week add a sticky note from the lesson to one of the Gospel Truths. This can be modeled by a teacher with younger grades (Grades 1-3).

Word Bag - Big words children should know by 5th grade. Draw one word each week, look up a verse and discuss it as a class. Build a word wall of these big words that children should know. For Example: Repent, Grace, Mercy, Salvation, Redemption, Forgiveness, Faith, Gospel, etc.

Find us Faithful

*Oh, may all who come behind us find us faithful
May the fire of our devotion light their way
May the footprints that we leave lead them to believe
And the lives we live inspire them to obey
Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful*

Lyrics by Jon Mohr

NOTES

Lifeway Kids. "God's Brave Girl." *Lifeway Christian Resources*, 2020.

Lifeway Kids. "The Gospel: God's Plan for Me." *Lifeway Christian Resources*, 2012.

Magruder, Jana. "Nothing Less." *Lifeway Christian Resources*, 2017.

Peters, Chuck, et al. "Flip the Script: Disrupting Tradition for the Sake of the Next Generation." *Lifeway Christian Resources*, 2023.