

The Value of Training Sunday School Teachers

How far will an athlete progress in their sport if they are not committed to training? Why does a champion player like St. Louis Cardinals first baseman Albert Pujols participate in batting practice day after day? Isn't he good enough to just show up at the game and play ball? Can Yadier Molina, star catcher for the St. Louis Cardinals, work a pitcher without understanding and studying the pitcher, his characteristics, and his strengths and weaknesses? Can any NFL quarterback play the game without first studying the playbook, learning about his receivers strengths and weaknesses, and practice throwing the football in all kinds of weather conditions? The answer for each of these questions is NO! The same can be said about the training and equipping of the local church Sunday School faculty. Training and equipping is of utmost importance. It is the lifeblood of an effective Sunday School!

In 2005, the Georgia Baptist Convention identified the top fifty growing Sunday Schools in their convention and then identified the top ten characteristics found in all or most of the Sunday Schools. The number one characteristic found in 49 of the 50 Sunday Schools was, you guessed it – training! Pastor, how important is training to you and your Sunday School leadership? Sunday School Director, how do you motivate your faculty to participate in ongoing training? Sunday School teacher, what kind of training do you need to make you more effective? Let's explore some answers to these questions.

The Pastor is the champion of Sunday School! I "preach" this message all the time because it is absolutely true. If the pastor will not champion Sunday School, extol its virtues and importance to the congregation, and participate in the ongoing training and equipping process, the congregation will see Sunday School as just another program. In the pamphlet titled *The Pastor: Key To A Vibrant, Growing Sunday School*, a reprint of a Thom S. Rainer article published (with permission) by the MBC Sunday School/Discipleship Team the author states "Rarely are pastors taught the importance of Sunday School in the health of their churches. Yet, the potential of Sunday School will rarely be realized without the ownership and enthusiastic support of the pastor" (page 4). If you have a well trained and equipped Sunday School faculty that fulfill their responsibilities with excellence, your church will grow.

The Sunday School Director is a key leader in this process. Often, in the smaller church, the Sunday School Director is the Christian education expert. It is his or her responsibility to build an effective Sunday School team capable of fulfilling all of their responsibilities with excellence. Motivating the faculty to participate in ongoing training is a true leadership challenge. The director must help the faculty see both the potential and the purpose of an effective Sunday School ministry. A principle of leadership is to be doing or be willing to begin

doing anything asked of those he or she leads. That means that the Sunday School Director must be training and equipping along side of the faculty. When a Sunday School teacher, outreach leader, care group leader, etc. understands the potential outcome of their commitment to train and they understand the purposes of an effective Sunday School, they will be more willing to participate. Too many times, our leaders are not aware of the purposes and goals of effective teaching and will, by default, forego training because they can not see the value inherent in the training opportunity.

The Sunday School teacher must understand their role in the overall ministry. The Sunday School class is where lives are transformed. The Sunday School class is where some very basic discipleship (spiritual growth) occurs; where connection, assimilation, and fellowship happens; where relationships are strengthened; and where opportunities for ministry are offered. That is a lot to oversee and the effective Sunday School teacher will build a functional team that helps in addressing all of these needs. In order for that to happen with excellence, the teacher must participate in ongoing training. The role of the Sunday School Class teacher fulfills is basic to a local church having a vibrant, dynamic, and effective ministry in their community and beyond.

There is so much more that I could say but space precludes that. You can, however, get started by participating in local training and equipping opportunities your church may offer. You can do a book study that helps you understand your students, become a better teacher, or just adds to your knowledge about effective team leadership. You can plan on participating in the Fall Regional Schools that provide equipping for all age-group teachers and faculty. You can log onto the LifeWay web pages (www.lifeway.com/sundayschool) and look for articles that interest you.

Yes, there are many ways you can participate in training that will equip you to accomplish your calling as a Sunday School leader. If you need more information, contact me at bmorrison@mobaptist.com. My prayer for you is that you purpose in your heart to become the best Sunday School leader you can be. It all begins with a commitment to training!

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