

IMPROVING YOUR SUNDAY SCHOOL

A Guide for Pastors and Sunday School Superintendents

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REGULAR BAPTIST PRESS
1300 North Meacham Road
Schaumburg, Illinois 60173-4806

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www.RegularBaptistPress.org • 1-800-727-4440

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Printed in U.S.A.

RBP 5257 • ISBN 978-0-59402-853-3

Revised Edition

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INTRODUCTION

SOME PEOPLE look at the Sunday School today and are ready to write its obituary. After all, Sunday School attendance is declining. Sunday School doesn't seem to be relevant to contemporary society. Many people attend only the morning worship service and bypass the Sunday School.

Shall we just quietly bury the Sunday School, shovel the dirt onto its coffin, and find something else to replace it? NO! A thousand times NO!

Sunday School can be a powerful tool in shaping people's lives. We don't need to replace it; we need to improve it!

Improving your Sunday School is what this book is all about. These suggestions will work in a large church or in a small church. Take these ideas and tailor them to your Sunday School. Commit yourself to do all you can to make your Sunday School a powerful tool for Christ.

The Regular Baptist Press BuildUP Philosophy of Church Education

BuildUP is a strategy that moves people toward spiritual maturity. It forms the framework for the Regular Baptist Press educational resources. The BuildUP acrostic summarizes this approach to ministry.

Believe the Gospel
Understand Biblical Ethics
Internalize Godliness
Learn Doctrine
Develop Life Skills
Uplift Others
Prepare to Serve

When pastors and church leaders emphasize these elements, the church grows spiritually.

Sunday School is your church's primary Bible education program. As you implement the BuildUP approach in your Sunday School, your students will move toward spiritual maturity.

You can implement the BuildUP emphasis by

1. Using Regular Baptist Press curriculum resources throughout your Sunday School;
2. Attending the Blueprint Leadership Seminar that trains church leaders in the BuildUP strategy;
3. Supplementing your curriculum with specially designed BuildUP Bible studies that may be used individually or in small groups.

For more information on BuildUP resources and training, visit www.RegularBaptistPress.org/buildup.

PART I—THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

CHAPTER

1

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT TEACHING?

THE BIBLE does not mention Sunday School (since it did not appear on the scene until around 1780), so is it Biblical? To answer this question, we first need to find out what the New Testament says about teaching.

The Example of Christ

The Lord Jesus Christ, our Model and Master, frequently taught. Matthew 4:23 records that “Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.” (Check also Matthew 5:1 and 2; 7:29; 9:35; 13:54; and 21:23 for other accounts of His teaching ministry.) On more than forty occasions the Gospels refer to Jesus’ teaching ministry.

People recognized Christ as a teacher. More than fifty times in the Gospels people addressed Him as “Master” or “Rabbi”—both of which mean “Teacher”! Even His enemies called Him by that title. In Matthew 22:16 the Pharisees “sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth.” (Note Mark 9:5 and 38 and John 13:13 for other places where people called Christ a teacher.) Jesus was “often a healer, sometimes a worker of miracles, frequently a preacher, but always a teacher” (Charles B. Eavey, *History of Christian Education*, p. 78).

The Commission of Christ

Jesus Christ included teaching in His Great Commission to us. In Matthew 28:19 and 20 Jesus said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.” The first occurrence of the word “teach” (v. 19) is a broad word that means “make disciples of.” This word involves the whole process described in these verses. The second occurrence of the word “teach” (“teaching,” v. 20) more directly relates to Bible teaching today. One of the ways we carry out Christ’s commission to make disciples of all nations is by teaching people.

The Example of the Early Church

The early church carried on an active teaching ministry. Acts 5:42 records that “daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.” (Read also Acts 11:26, 14:21, 15:35, and 18:11 and 26 to learn how the church emphasized teaching.) “The life and work of the early church, as revealed in Scripture, revolved in large measure around teaching” (Edward Hayes, “Establishing Biblical

Foundations,” *Christian Education: Foundations for the Future*, p. 38).

Christ exemplified teaching. He included teaching in His final command, and the early church made teaching a priority. Sounds pretty important, doesn't it?

So What about Sunday School?

So what can we say about Sunday School? Since Sunday School is a Bible-teaching ministry, it has a rightful place in a church program. In Sunday School we are doing exactly what the New Testament commands us to do: teach the Word.

We know Sunday School has a place in a church program, but how important is it in rela-

tion to other Bible-teaching ministries? I believe that **Sunday School is the best teaching ministry a church has**. Can I prove that statement? Read the next chapter to find out!

Think about It

1. Look up some references in the Old Testament related to teaching and learning. How would you describe the importance of teaching in the Old Testament?
2. What part does teaching have in the Great Commission?
3. Look up the additional Scripture references about Christ's teaching and teaching in the early church. What observations do you make from them?