**Check Out What’s Cool…**

**217**

**Ideas For Celebrating And Promoting**

**Sunday School And The Other**

**Bible Study Programs**

**Of Your Church!**

By Rodney L. Pray

**INTRODUCTION…**

 “Check Out What’s Cool In Sunday School.” That was the title that we gave to this little book when we first published it back in 2004, and even though many things have changed over the years, I still believe that Sunday school and other Bible study programs of the church are “cool” and worth celebrating and promoting.

 Of course, there are some who would dispute what I just said. There are many people in the world today who think that Sunday school is old fashioned, out of date and out of touch with the world today. I certainly don’t think that it is, but if it is, it is not the fault of Sunday school, it is the result of churches, church leaders and Sunday school teachers and workers who have allowed it to become that way.

 Sunday school is just as relevant and effective today as it has ever been! But Sunday school is not the only form that Bible study can take. There are also mid-week Bible studies, home study groups, kid’s clubs, youth groups, VBS, and many others. There are certainly a lot of different forms that Bible study can take, but whatever the form, we must make sure that our teachers know how to present the never changing message of God’s Word – the Bible – to an ever-changing world. And, even if you have the very best and most effective teachers possible, you still need to be able to show and tell the people of your church and community about the effectiveness of Sunday school and these other Bible study programs – and that’s what this book is all about.

 When I wrote the original “Check Out What’s Cool in Sunday School” book, I included “129 ideas for celebrating and promoting Sunday school.” Since that time, I have been on the lookout for additional ideas to add to the book and with all of the ideas that I have accumulated, I think that now is the time to revise the book and add all of the new ideas that I have found.

 As you read through this revised book, you will find ideas related to planning a Sunday school or Bible study celebration, ideas for promoting your Bible study and related events, and for making your Christian education programs their very best and most effective. Certainly, you should not even consider trying to use every idea in the book, but as you look at all of the ideas listed, try to pick and choose things that would help you do the best possible job in your church.

 There are two new things included with this revised book. First, we have included a number of church and community outreach and special event activities, such as holding special services at a local nursing home and sponsoring computer education classes for the senior citizens of your church and community. Even though these may not be directly activities that will “celebrate” or “promote” Sunday school, I think that they are important because they show that your Sunday school is active and involved in the overall work of your church and within your community.

 The second special thing that you will find is a section with fundraising ideas. You might use these ideas to raise funds for missions and other projects, such as upgrading your church’s technology equipment.

 I hope that you find ideas that will spark your interest and that you can use to get people involved in the planning and other work necessary to put the programs and ideas into effect. Remember, Sunday school and other Bible study programs are about helping all persons of all ages learn more about Jesus Christ, the Bible and God’s will for their lives. As you work to make your church’s Christian education programs better and more effective, you are working for Jesus Christ! And, oh yes, if you have any additional ideas, please let me know. I will keep them in a file until it’s time to revise the book again.

 Rod Pry

**217 Ideas For Celebrating And Promoting Sunday School And**

**The Other Bible Study Programs Of Your Church…**

1. **Plan a month-long Sunday school or Bible study celebration.** Most churches begin their new Sunday school year in September and a special emphasis to help get the new Sunday school year off to a great start is always a good idea. However, there is no reason why you couldn’t use any other month of the year for your special Bible study or Sunday school emphasis. We suggest that you have a different theme each Sunday of the month (see the next several items). The goals for your Sunday school or Bible study month emphasis should be to help remind each of the members of your church of the value of Christian education and to reach out to the unchurched of your community and to invite them to come to your church and your Bible study programs.
2. **Hold a “Celebrate Sunday School Sunday.”** Sunday school is great and worth celebrating! To remind the members of your church of the importance of Sunday school, why not plan a special “Celebrate Sunday School Sunday.” On that day you will want to emphasize the good and positive things about your Sunday school. Plan a number of special activities and events to be a part of the day.
3. **Hold a “Sunday School Rally Day Sunday.”** The “Sunday School Rally Day” is a very old idea, but still a very good one. On this special day, members are urged to “rally” around their church and Sunday school. The traditional idea for a Rally Day is to have a combined Sunday school service with a special speaker and special music, and a program that focuses on the importance of Sunday school and Christian education. Churches also often set “Rally Day” goals for attendance and offering.
4. **Hold a “Sunday School Homecoming Sunday.”** The idea for a “homecoming Sunday” is to invite family, friends and former members of the church to come back for a special day of celebration and fellowship. Such programs usually include a combined program with special music and a special speaker. Social activities that allow time for everyone to fellowship with friends, family and those that they haven’t seen for several years are also a great idea.
5. **Hold a special “Sunday School Children’s Sunday.”** Our children are perhaps the most important part of our Sunday school. Planning a special “Children’s Sunday” as a day to both honor and involve the children of the Sunday school is a great idea. You might plan a combined service that has special features for the children (stories, puppet show, Christian magic show, etc.) You might also try to involve as many of the children in the program as possible. Have them read the scripture, read poems, sing group choruses, provide special music, etc.
6. **Hold a special “Sunday School Youth Sunday.”** Our youth are, indeed, the church of tomorrow, but they are also an important part of the church of today. Therefore, why not plan a special “Sunday School Youth Sunday.” Such a special Sunday might include contemporary Christian music or praise choruses, a special youth speaker and more. You might also try to involve the youth in the program by allowing them to read the scripture, have the prayer, lead the singing, etc. Another idea would be to have the youth present a skit about the importance of Sunday school.
7. **Hold a special “Sunday School Family Day.”** Every Sunday school leader should see the families of his community as both an obligation and an opportunity. We have an obligation to reach out to all of the families of our community and to try to minister to them. Families also present a great opportunity for our Sunday school. The addition of just a few new families could mean a significant increase in attendance. One way to do this might be to hold a special “Sunday School Family Day.” Plan a variety of family related activities and give small rewards to each member of entire families that attend Sunday school on that day.
8. **Hold a “Bible Sunday.”** The Bible is the Christian’s “handbook for life” and our textbook for Sunday school and other Bible study program. As a way of emphasizing the importance of the Bible, why not hold a special “Bible Sunday.” On that day, urge all persons of all ages to bring their Bible and give a small reward to each person who has a Bible. You might also have someone speak about the importance of the Bible. Another idea would be to create a display of the old Bibles owned by your members.
9. **Hold a special “Sunday School Enlargement Campaign.”** The idea behind a “Sunday School Enlargement Campaign” is to have a special Sunday school emphasis and related special programs over an extended period of four to six weeks.
10. **Hold a “Sunday School or Bible Study Open House.”** In the average church today, only about 25% of the total membership attends Sunday school. Often those other 75% have no idea what’s going on in Sunday school and other Bible study programs. One of the best ways to tell them about these programs is to hold a “Sunday School & Bible Study Open House.” Have the “open house” either right before or right after your morning worship service. Have each of the classrooms open with displays of materials being studied, crafts, etc. You should also have each of the teachers and several students from the class in the room to answer questions. Serving refreshments is also a good idea.
11. **Hold a special “Promotion Sunday” program for your Sunday school.** “Promotion Sunday” is the day when children and youth (and possibly adults) are “promoted” to the next grade or class within the Sunday school. “Promotion Sunday” can provide a great opportunity to make a special emphasis within your church related to your Sunday school. Most churches hold “Promotion Sunday” at the beginning of September. You might hold a combined opening for your Sunday school on that day. During that combined opening you might introduce all of your teachers and the members of each of their classes. You might also say a little about what the classes will be doing or studying.
12. **Hold a special “Teacher Dedication” service…**during your worship service! As mentioned earlier, most churches only have about one-quarter of their members involved in Sunday school. How can we tell the other members of our church about what’s happening in Sunday school and your other Bible study programs? One idea is to hold special activities related to these programs – such as dedication of your teachers – in the worship service. “Teacher Dedication” is often held in conjunction with a “Promotion Sunday.” Through the service, you should dedicate your teachers to the work of the Lord and remind them of the great responsibility to which they have been called.
13. **Encourage each of your members to carry the Bible with them.** Whether they carry an actual Bible (a book) or have a Bible app on their smartphone, laptop or computer tablet, everyone should have a Bible easily accessible. Having a Bible handy is a great tool for talking with others about what God’s word says and when witnessing. It also allows the person to read the Bible wherever they are. And, remind your members not to be ashamed to be seen carrying and reading the Bible. After all, the Bible is our “handbook” and we should always strive to learn even more about what our Lord has to say to us through His word.
14. **Encourage your members to get a Bible study program for their computer.** Having a Bible on your computer or smartphone is great, but a Bible study program is even better. These programs contain so much more information, such as concordances and Bible dictionaries. And, most have a variety of Bible translations that allow the person to study and dig even deeper into God’s word.
15. **Use a “Christian Education Moment” reading before the start of your worship service.** This is another idea for a way to tell those persons who attend worship – but do not attend Sunday school – about the importance of your Sunday school and Christian education programs. Prepare a short presentation about the importance of Bible study and about special programs or activities that your church offers, and have it read before the start of the worship service. You might use these “Christian Education Moment” readings once a month or more often.
16. **Create special “Sunday School or Bible Study Update” bulletin inserts.** Such bulletin inserts might be included with your weekly worship bulletins once a month or when you are having special programs or activities. These special bulletin inserts might list general information about the importance of Sunday school and Bible study programs plus news about what individual classes are doing or planning.
17. **Urge your church to “Celebrate September as Sunday School Month.**” Each year churches are urged to get their new Sunday school year off to a great start by celebrating September as Sunday school month. To help churches plan and carry out their celebration, the BibleStudyAmerica.org website will offer you help and ideas to plan and carry out your celebration.
18. **Create a “Sunday School or Bible Study Bulletin Board.**” This should be a bulletin board in a very prominent location within your church. Place a large, eye-catching slogan or logo at the top of the bulletin board. Under it you might place information about upcoming events and information about what the different classes are doing. You might also highlight a different class each month. Include photos of the class members and the teacher and candid pictures from their classroom. Another idea would be to allow a different class to create the bulletin board display each month.
19. **Hold a Bible trivia contest night.** Knowledge of the Bible and its application to life is what Sunday school and other Bible study programs are all about. Events like a Bible trivia night at your church can be fun, but it can also be very educational. You might select individuals to play against each other or you might play as teams. If you are looking for a good source for Bible trivia questions, check out the Internet or go to your local Christian bookstore.
20. **Urge Sunday school classes to hold studies about the importance of Bible study and the Bible.** We assume that everyone knows why they should attend Sunday school and other Bible study groups, but that’s not always something that we can be sure of. One thing that you might do is to urge each of your teachers to plan a special study about the importance of Bible study. This should be done not just with the adult classes but for all age groups. A good source for information to help plan such a study would be the Internet..
21. **Urge teachers to send reminder e-mails to each of their students during the week before their lesson presentation in their Bible study group or Sunday school.** It’s a great way to remind everyone of the next meeting and it can also be a way to remind students of the lesson topic and things that they can do to prepare for the study.
22. **Hold an “I Love Sunday School Because…**” **writing contest.** Why do your members love Sunday school? You might sponsor a contest where your members would be encouraged to write a short essay (say 100 words or less) on the topic “I Love Sunday School Because…” This could be a contest for all persons of all ages or just for children and youth. Hold the judging for the contest in different age groups and give small prizes to each of the winners. You might have winners read their essays during the worship service and have as many of the essays as possible reprinted in your church newsletter. This could also be done for the various Bible study groups that you offer.
23. **Invite older members of your Sunday school to write stories about what Sunday school was like when they were younger.** You might have your older adults write these stories or you might have someone interview these persons and then write the stories for them. Persons of all ages will find such stories interesting. Have the stories printed in your church newsletter and placed on your church’s website.
24. **Hold a “Sunday School Attendance Contest.**” “Attendance Contests” are often held as a tool to help involve classes and individuals in the work of Sunday school growth. We suggest that, rather than having classes or individuals competing against each other, the best way to hold such a contest is to have classes working to try to increase their own average attendance. Determine the average attendance for each of your classes over the past three months. That number then becomes their “target.” The contest involves classes working to increase their average attendance over the next month or six weeks by the greatest possible percentage. The class that has the greatest percentage of growth each week and over the period of the contest might receive a small reward.
25. **Create kids’ Sunday school and Bible study activity sheets.** As the class sessions for the children of your Sunday school and Kidz Club groups come to an end, it is important that teachers give the kids something to take along with them to remind them of the messages of the lesson and also to give them something that they can continue to do on their own or with their family at home. Some curriculum materials include such sheets, but if your lesson materials do not, teachers should be encouraged to create such sheets on their own. Check out the internet and your local Christian bookstore for games, puzzle sheets and other information that could be included on such sheets.
26. **Urge your pastor to speak on the value of Sunday school, Bible study, Christian education and the Bible.** In many churches there is a large group of people who attend worship who do not attend Bible study group. Every person of every age should be in both worship and Bible study. One way to emphasize the importance of these groups and the Bible to the entire congregation is by urging your pastor to speak on the value of Christian education during his morning message. If you have a “children’s sermon,” you might also urge the person presenting this message to talk about the importance of Sunday school, Bible study and the Bible to the children.
27. **Hold a “Sunday School Hymn Sing.**” This could be a special service held on a Sunday evening or at some other time. During the service you could sing many of the favorite, old Sunday school hymns and choruses. You might also have someone talk about the history of some of these hymns. (There are a number of great books available at Christian bookstores about the history of hymns.) You might also have some of the older members of your Sunday school share some of their memories about Sunday school from “the good old days.” Be sure to allow those attending to request their favorite hymns, too.
28. **Hold a “Bible Study Prayer Service.**” Do you have special needs or concerns related to your Sunday school and other Bible study programs? What are you doing about these concerns? The first thing that you should be doing is to take them to God in prayer. To do this, you will certainly want to remind each of your members about your concerns and urge them to pray for these needs on a regular basis. You might also plan a special “Prayer Service” as a time of special, concentrated prayer for your teachers, the children and youth of these groups, the members of your church who do not attend any Bible study group, etc. You might hold such a special prayer service some evening, on a Sunday afternoon or early Sunday morning, before your regular services.
29. **Hold a “Bible Study Prayer Breakfast.**” Many churches and groups hold “Prayer Breakfasts” for a variety of special reasons. Why not hold a “Sunday School Prayer Breakfast” or a “Bible Study Prayer Breakfast” to have a time of fellowship and good food – and to pray for the needs and concerns related to your C. E. programs.
30. **Urge classes to create an E-mail, Facebook or text message contact list for each of their students.** This allows teachers and Sunday school leaders to share reminders related to upcoming special events and activities. And it also allows rapid contact of students when there is an urgent prayer request or when a meeting has been cancelled due to bad weather.
31. **Create a “Sunday School Prayer Calendar.**” Everything related to your Sunday school and other Bible study groups should be wrapped in prayer! As a way of encouraging your members to pray for these programs and to share the needs and concerns related to your Sunday school with them, we suggest that you create a “Sunday School Prayer Calendar.” This could be done on an actual calendar blank or simply as a list of dates for the month. On each day you list a prayer suggestion related to your Sunday school. These could be general suggestions, such as “my Sunday school teacher, “the children of our Sunday school,” “the families of our church who do not attend Sunday school,” etc. or they could be more specific, such as the pastor, the Sunday school superintendent, names of specific teachers, specific needs, etc. If you create such a calendar, be sure to distribute it to all members of your congregation, not just Sunday school members.
32. **Hold a “Sunday School Covered Dish Meal.**” Everyone loves to eat! One of the best promotional events that you can hold in the church is a congregational covered dish or potluck meal. Hold the event after your morning services on Sunday. Urge each family attending to bring one hot and one cold dish to share. Following the meal, have a brief presentation about the importance of Sunday school and other Bible study programs plus a fun game or other activity and maybe some special music. “Sunday School Covered Dish Meals” are also great “kick-off events for the new Sunday school year.
33. **Send “care packages” to the college students and persons serving in the military.** Do you have young persons from your church and community who are serving in the military or who are away at college? If so, your Sunday school or a Sunday school class might take the lead in sending “care packages” to these persons. These packages will let these persons know that you are thinking of them and will give them some of the things that they might miss by being away from home. You might ask members of your Sunday school or class to contribute items or you might have someone purchase the items for each box. You might also include personal notes of encouragement from each of the members of your group.
34. **Provide after school care for the children of your church and community.** In today’s world, many parents work much later than when their kids get home from school. Rather than letting these kids go to their homes alone, you might start an afterschool care center at your church, manned by volunteers from your church or Sunday school. Have games, a snack and time for the kids to work on their homework.
35. **Hold a “parents’ night out” care center.** This idea is rather simple: Provide childcare at your church once a month or several times a year in the evening so that parents can have a night out. Use volunteers from your Sunday school and other Bible study groups to provide the care for the evening. You might especially provide such a service around Valentine’s Day and before Christmas, so that parents can go shopping without the kids.
36. **Get more involved in community outreach by distributing copies of “The Jesus Film” to homes in your community.** “The Jesus Film” has a great evangelistic message and the DVDs of the movie can be purchased in large quantities for a very low price. Check it out on the Internet. Once you have the videos, deliver them door-to-door or give them to your members and ask them to give them to their friends.
37. **Give away special Sunday school message CD’s.** Has one of your Sunday school teachers presented a particularly interesting and inspirational message on a relevant topic? If so, why not have that teacher record the lesson and then transfer it to CD or DVD? These discs could be given away through the members of your Sunday school and church or they could even be given away through a small display at a local business.
38. **Give away Bibles.** The American Bible Society says that the majority of people in the U.S. own a Bible, but not everyone does. In fact, you might be surprised at the number of people in your church and community who would really appreciate having an easy-to-read, modern translation Bible. Check with your local Christian bookstore and online to find a source for Bibles at a reasonable price and then distribute them through local homeless shelters, food banks and even through local businesses. And urge your members to talk to their friends to see if any of them need a Bible.
39. **Sponsor a booth or display at a local community event, such as a carnival.** At such a booth you might distribute free bottled water or other snacks. You might also give away free Bibles. And be sure to have lots of information about your Sunday school and other Bible study groups to share.
40. **Distribute Sunday school tracts.** Every member of your church should be encouraged to be involved in witnessing to their friends, family members and others about Jesus Christ and the importance of Sunday school and the other Bible study programs of your church. One of the “tools” that can be a great help in this area is tracts. Small, easy-to-read tracts about the value of Sunday school are available from a number of tract publishers and from organizations like the Pennsylvania State Sunday School Association. We suggest that you purchase a supply of such tracts and then either distribute them to your members or have them in a rack where members can easily get them.
41. **Hold a “Sunday School Balloon Launch.**” The idea here is to attach cards with general information about the value of Sunday school or specific invitations or testimonies from your Sunday school members written on them to helium-filled balloons. As a part of a special ceremony, the balloons are released to the wind as we try to reach out to the world and tell everyone about the importance of Sunday school. Note: balloon launches are not as popular today as they once were because of environmental concerns. However, “environmentally friendly” biodegradable balloons are available. Check with the party supply stores in your area.
42. **Sponsor a music concert.** Music concerts are a great event to hold for your church and community. Whether you use a big-name group or local talent, your event will almost certainly draw a big crowd. In addition to the music, you might have someone talk about the importance of Bible study and the Bible during the program. Music concerts can also be a great fundraising event for your Sunday school and your mission projects.
43. **Create Sunday school promotional posters.** When you want to promote events within your church, you probably often create special posters for the event and then display them throughout your church and community. Why not do the same thing for Sunday school and your other Bible study programs? Create an eye-catching poster that tells about the importance of the group and the Bible and also extends an invitation to everyone to attend.
44. **Create a Sunday school and Bible study library.** Do the members of your church have good books that they would be willing to share with others from your church or community? Set up a Sunday school library in your church and invite the people of your church to share books through the program. You might even have the library open some evening of the week so that people from your community could be involved too.
45. **Create a Sunday school Bible reading calendar.** Every member of your church should be encouraged to read the Bible every day and having a Bible reading calendar or schedule can help. You might use one of the “read through the entire Bible in a year” plans or you might plan the reading schedule using scriptures that relate to the weekly Sunday school lesson themes or the pastor’s sermons.
46. **Sponsor a healthy living class.** Everyone is concerned about healthy living today. To help provide guidance for people in this area, your church might sponsor a healthy living class. Such a class might be held as a special short-term Sunday school class on Sunday morning or you might hold the program as a special Bible study on some evening during the week. The class might also be made available to other interested persons from your community.
47. **Hold a “Sunday School Poster Contest.**” Another way to get posters to promote your Bible study groups and Sunday school display in your church or community might be to hold a “Poster Contest.” This could be a contest for just the children and youth or you could even include the adults. You might have a set theme, such as “I Love Sunday School Because…” or “I Love The Bible Because…” or you might allow persons to create any poster that tells about the value of Sunday school or the Bible. Give interested persons a sheet of poster board and then let them get creative. Have judging for the contest in several age groups and give small awards to the winner and runner-up in each age group. Another idea would be to allow persons to use their computers to create small posters about Sunday school.
48. **Offer a car ride service for people to come to your Sunday school.** Many churches have busses that they run to collect children and others to bring them to church and Sunday school. If your church doesn’t have a church bus, you still might organize a service to provide transportation to your church and Sunday school for the people of your community using the cars of your members. Ask every person who drives to your Sunday school if they have room in their car to pick up an additional person or two on their way to your church each Sunday morning. Then spread the word throughout your community about your car ride service using posters or other publicity and invite persons who need a ride to contact your church office or the coordinator of the program. As requests come in, match up the cars and the persons needing a ride. Be sure to have the drivers contact the riders to finalize the time that they will pick them up and other arrangements.
49. **Looking for more Bible lesson ideas?** **Google it!** Did you know that Google is the number one search engine on the Internet? And are you aware of all of the information, ideas and resources that are available through search engines like Google? When you are looking for information or ideas, such as “Bible lessons for children,” Google it! You will be surprised at everything that you may find.
50. **Urge your members to get together in groups of two or three for times of more personal interaction, discussion and sharing.** These persons might meet for breakfast once every two weeks or whenever it is convenient. They might also read and discuss a good Christian book or simply share and discuss things that are happening in each of their lives. One of the benefits of these more intimate meetings is that those involved can actually hold each other more accountable in their Christian walk.
51. **Use your Sunday school youth.** There is an old saying about youth in the church and Sunday school – “Use ‘em or lose ‘em!” This simply means that youth who are actively involved in the church and Sunday school are more likely to be in attendance and to continue as a part of the church than those who are not involved. You might use the youth as greeters or even helpers in the children’s department of your Sunday school and with your Kidz Club and other children’s programs. You might also get these students involved in the worship service and in community outreach and mission projects. One area where most youth can really be helpful in the church is with technology. Most youth know a lot about social media, websites and the equipment involved, so make use of their knowledge and skill.
52. **Hold a “Sunday School Breakfast.**” Earlier we talked about holding a “Sunday School Prayer Breakfast,” but you might also consider holding a special breakfast event as a promotional program for your Sunday school and other Bible study groups. Following the food, you might have someone speak about the value of Bible study and the Bible. You might introduce the teachers and members of each of your Sunday school classes and Bible study groups, and talk a little about what each class or group is doing.
53. **Hold a “Sunday School Tree Planting Ceremony.**” As a way of symbolizing the planting of God’s Word through the Sunday school and Bible study, you might hold a “Sunday School Tree Planting Ceremony.” Before the end of a regular or special Sunday school program, have everyone move out to the church lawn. There, have a hole dug and a tree prepared for planting. Have someone talk about the importance of Sunday school and Bible study, and the symbolism of planting the tree for the planting of God’s Word in the hearts of students. Place the tree in the hole and then allow a representative of each class to place a shovel of dirt around the tree. Close the ceremony with a familiar chorus and prayer.
54. **Spread the word about “the word” by placing stickers on small candy bars and other items.** Here’s another way that you can spread the word about your Sunday school and Bible study groups. Print Bible verses and a simple invitation to your Sunday school or Bible study group on blank address label stickers. Place the stickers on small “fun size” candy bars or other items. Then give the items to the members of your church or give them away at community events.
55. **Are you aware of everything that you can do related to Sunday school with your smartphone?** Today’s modern cellphones – better known as smartphones – are so much more than just phones. You can use them to send text messages and e-mails. You can use them to search the internet. You can take photos and videos and much, much more. Teachers can use their smartphones to help prepare their weekly lessons. They can look for information and ideas. They can access dozens of different Bible translations. You can find videos and other resources that can be included with a lesson. And students can even use their smartphones in class. They can look up different translations of the Bible and they can Google questions and search for answers to questions that come up in class. So, don’t tell students to turn off their cellphones; just ask them to silence them.
56. **Create a sermon discussion class in Sunday school.** Did you ever wish that you could sit down and discuss the morning’s sermon with your pastor? Well, many churches are giving members just such an opportunity by having a sermon discussion class as a part of their Sunday morning Bible studies. This works best when the discussion time follows your worship service and, of course, you need to have the pastor involved. If you can’t have the class on Sunday morning, you might even do it on an evening during the week following.
57. **Hold a “Sunday School Parade.**” Many years ago, “Sunday School Parades” were a really big thing. In many towns, they would involve bands, floats and hundreds of marchers, and they would be held right down Main Street. Planning such an event might not be possible for most churches today, but why not consider holding your own Sunday school parade – right in your church parking lot. Get some of your musicians to form a small band. Have classes create small “floats” on the children’s wagons. Have classes create banners and march together as a group. Have children dress up like Bible characters. Then invite your entire congregation and the community to come and enjoy the parade.
58. **Hold a “Sunday School Block Party.**” Fellowship is an important part of what Sunday school and other Bible study groups are all about. Everyone likes to eat and meet with friends and a great way to do this is at a neighborhood “Block Party.” A “Sunday School or Bible Study Block Party” can do a number of things. It’s an opportunity to enjoy some great food (either provided by the church free or sold by different groups within the church). And it’s a great opportunity to promote your Sunday school and other Bible study groups. You might have the various classes and groups in charge of different “booths” at the “Block Party.” You might have food booths, games and information displays about the importance of Sunday school and Bible study.
59. **Hold a “Sunday School Picnic.**” The idea of a “Sunday School Picnic” is about as old as Sunday school itself. “Sunday School Picnics” are mainly held as fellowship building events. Invite your entire congregation to meet at a park or picnic pavilion. Start with the shared picnic meal, followed by games for the children and maybe even a softball game for the youth and adults, if facilities allow. Use posters and a short talk about the value of Sunday school to extend an invitation to everyone to attend.
60. **Videotape “I Love Sunday School” testimonials.** Does your church use scrolling PowerPoint announcements before the start of your worship service? Why not videotape several members of your Sunday school telling why they love Sunday school or other Bible study groups and play the videos during this announcement time. You might also place the videos on your church website.
61. **Hold a “Third World Hunger Meal” or “Hunger Awareness Meal.**” Do the students in your Sunday school and other Bible study classes appreciate what it would be like to live in a Third World country? To help them get a better idea what it might be like, hold a “third world hunger meal.” Search the internet and you will find information about how much – or rather how little – many people in the world have to eat. Several different meal plans and lots of additional information related to hunger in the world today can be found on the Internet. Check it out!
62. **Does your Sunday school have a yearly theme?** We recently learned of a Sunday school that has a yearly theme to help all members of all of the classes focus on a particular concern or need. This year their theme is “The Power of Prayer.” Other possible themes might include things like “Families Belong in Sunday School” or “Get Back to the Book (the Bible).” Urge teachers to incorporate the theme into their teaching and use the theme as a focal point for special events and other activities.
63. **Hold a “Church or Sunday School Family Night.**” We often say that “Families Belong in Sunday School.” However, one of the things that happens in most Sunday schools is that as soon as a family enters the church building, we divide them up and send them off in separate directions. Not that this is bad – teaching persons according to their age, interest and ability is one of the things that makes Sunday school so great – but still, we also need to be doing things that will encourage and build family “togetherness.” To build this “togetherness” for our families and for our total Sunday school family, we need to hold events and activities beyond the one-hour Sunday school time of Sunday morning. One event that you might consider in order to build “family” in your Sunday school is a “Sunday School Family Game Night.” You might begin the evening with a covered dish or potluck meal. You then might have planned, “TV-type” games or just allow persons to sit around and play their favorite board games. Another idea would be to have family videos or a talent contest.
64. **Hold an “Outdoor Sunday School Service.**” Do you have to hold your Sunday school indoors on all of those beautiful summer Sundays? As an alternative, why not plan to hold your Sunday school outdoors some Sunday. Rather than meeting at the church, meet at a park or other outdoor area. For this special service you might not be able to divide the group into separate classes. Instead, just divide the group into children, youth and adults. Allow the adults to meet at the picnic pavilion or band shell of the park and send the children and youth groups to different areas of the park. Encourage the teachers for each group to take advantage of the outdoor setting as they present their lesson. Following the time of study, you might have a shared picnic lunch.
65. **Hold an outdoor summer movie night.** Here’s another outdoor fellowship event that your Sunday school or Bible study group might sponsor – hold an outdoor summer movie night. Use a good video projector to project the movie onto a large white sheet or screen. Hold the event at your church or in a local park. Ask everyone to bring their lawn chairs or a blanket and provide popcorn and other movie snacks for everyone to enjoy. Show family movies or Christian films that every member of the family will appreciate.
66. **Sponsor a movie night at your church.** In the previous article, we talked about holding an outdoor movie night during the summer, but what about holding a movie night at your church anytime of the year? Set up a video projector and chairs in your fellowship hall and invite everyone – the families and other members of your church, and people from your community – to come and enjoy an evening of family entertainment. To find good Christian based films, check the Internet.
67. **Hold a “Sunday School Children’s Fair.**” The idea for a “Sunday School Children’s Fair” is to hold an event that will help attract the children of your church and the community to your Sunday school. “Children’s Fairs” are usually held on a Saturday in an outdoor setting. Set up tables and have different classes from your Sunday school in charge of the activities at each table. Some of the tables might have free food. Some might have crafts for the kids to work at. Some might have Bible stories or videos or puppet shows. In addition, have informational displays for parents about your church and the importance of Sunday school. Publicize the event well and invite all of the children of the community and their parents to attend.
68. **Sponsor a Halloween alternative event.** Trick-or-treating is often not a very safe activity in many communities. So, why not hold a community Halloween alternative event in your church. Ask the families of your church to bring their candy to distribute at the event. Also have games and party food. You might also ask the kids to dress up as their favorite Bible character for the event. Many churches also hold “trunk-or-treat” Halloween events where cars are parked in the church parking lot and treats are distributed from the trunks of the cars.
69. **Create a “Prayer Walk.**” In the garden or back yard of your church, create a guided “prayer walk” where members and friends can stop by and walk along a guided route with “prayer stations” established along the way. At each of the “prayer stations,” persons going on the “walk” can stop and read a few verses of scripture and then pray and meditate. The walk could be guided with printed signs along the way or with handout sheets. The sheet or signs might contain printed Bible verses and prayer suggestions along with other notes of encouragement and inspiration.
70. **Sponsor a “Coffee House.**” Coffee houses were a big thing back in the 1960’s and 1970’s. You might revive the idea by holding a coffee house at your church. Set up small tables where people can sit and talk. Provide coffee and other refreshments. You should also have music – live music, if possible. The traditional music for a coffee house is fold, but today just about any type of music – including contemporary Christian music – would be acceptable. Coffee houses are usually designed for youth and young adults, but you might also get a number of older adults who remember the coffee houses of the past. Encourage members to bring their friends and to engage everyone in discussion of today’s issues, including issues related to faith and your church.
71. **Hold a Sunday school “photo with Bible verse contest.**” Ask the members of your church or Sunday school look through their photos or take new ones that are inspirational or beautiful. Then ask them to put a Bible verse or slogan with the photo. This can all be done very simply using a computer. You might have a specific theme or you could allow any type of photo to be entered. Allow the people of your church or Sunday school to “vote” for the winner.
72. **Create “Burma-Shave-type” Sunday school signs**. “Burma-Shave” was a men’s shaving cream back in the mid-1900’s. It was famous for the way they advertised – with a series of roadside signs that contained catchy sayings and poems. You might use this type of promotion by creating a series of five or more signs spaced several hundred feet apart so that they can be read by motorists as they drive by. Find a verse or message that you want to present and then break it down into different short lines. Have the lines printed on individual signs and placed along a street or road.
73. **Create a “Family Banner.”** Give each of the families of your church or Sunday school a felt square, oval or other shape for them to decorate with fabric paints, glitter, appliques, etc. You could ask each family to put their name on the felt shape or just decorate them as they wish. Once each family has completed their design, attach the block to a large felt banner. You might have lettering like “Families Belong in Sunday School…” at the top of the banner. Display the banner in a prominent location within your church.
74. **Hold a “Bible Jeopardy Night.**” Everyone loves the TV game “Jeopardy.” Why not create your own “Jeopardy” game board that contains columns with “answers” related to Bible questions. You might have the event as an evening family night or as a part of a special church event or program.
75. **Give away bottled water with a Sunday school or Bible study invitation attached.** Here’s another idea for something that you can do to extend a special invitation to the people of your community to your church or Sunday school – give away bottles of water that have a special invitation message wrapper attached over the bottle’s regular label. You might give these bottles away at a summer sporting event, carnival, community picnic, parade or similar event.
76. **Be aware of the danger of “teacher burn-out.”** Leaders in the church and Sunday school often think that teachers and other workers in the church should be willing to do their job week after week without a break and with no complaints. But we need to be aware of the very real danger of “teacher burn-out.” Preparing a great lesson that is interesting and relevant week after week takes a lot of time and effort on the part of the teacher. And even though there is “joy in serving Jesus,” after a while, all of this hard work can take its toll on your teachers and other workers. To avoid this, make sure that your teachers have sufficient help and support. Allow teachers in the youth and adult departments to share teaching duties by teaching every other Sunday or once a month. In the children’s and youth departments, use team teachers. And, when you enlist a teacher, make sure that they know what they are getting into by setting up a “term of service.” Every teacher needs to take a break after a certain amount of time.
77. **Sponsor a “Bible Read-A-Thon for the children and youth of your church.** A “Bible Read-A-Thon” is a great activity for summer. Encourage the children and youth to read as many chapters of the Bible as they can over a set period of time. Give small awards for the children and youth of different ages that read the most. You can also hold a “Bible Read-A-Thon” as a fundraiser. Ask the members of your church to sponsor a particular child or youth with a donation of so much for each chapter that the child reads. If the person agrees to give 25 cents per chapter and the child reads 20 chapters, the donation would be $5.00.
78. **Hold a “Sunday School Birthday Party.**” This is sometimes called an “Everybody’s Birthday Party.” Before the party, twelve different tables are set up and decorated, one for each month. As persons arrive for the party, they sit at the table for the month in which they were born. You might have a covered dish meal or just birthday party food (cake and ice cream). The party might also include games, special entertainment, etc.
79. **Sponsor a “Church Clean-up Day.”** Spring is a great time for your Bible study group or Sunday school class to sponsor a “church clean-up day.” Have members bring lawn and garden tools to clean up and spruce up around the outside of your church and also have people bring cleaning supplies to give the interior of your church and education department a good sprucing up.
80. **Hold a time of fellowship before or after your morning Sunday school service.** The idea for this is to give all of the members of your Sunday school an opportunity to meet and have fellowship with one another. Adult Sunday school classes might take turns providing light refreshments like donuts, bagels, juice, etc. The half-hour fellowship time might be held every Sunday or just one Sunday each month.
81. **Make sure that there is a flat-screen TV in each of your Sunday school and Bible study rooms.** I recently visited a church that had either a TV or a video projector in each of their classrooms. When teachers come to class on Sunday morning, they simply plug their laptop into the TV and they are ready to present lesson outlines, announcements, song lyrics, videos, pictures, maps and much more. Today you can get a good 31” flat screen TV for around $100. At that price you could easily use one of the fundraising ideas listed at the end of this article to raise enough money to equip each of your rooms with this great modern technology!
82. **Hold a “Teachers’ Recognition Sunday” in your church.** Sunday school and other Bible study group teachers should never be involved in teaching for the recognition, praise or rewards that they hope to get out of it. Still, every teacher needs to know that all of their hard work and commitment to teaching is appreciated. At least once each year, every church should plan a “Teacher Recognition Sunday.” The day should include a number of special activities that will let all workers know the congregation appreciate all of their hard work.
83. **Give away pens and pencils that contain your Sunday school name or a Sunday school message.** Every time someone picks up a pen or pencil, they glance at it and see the subtle message printed on the item. So, if you are looking for a great give away item to promote your church or Sunday school, why not consider custom printed pens or pencils. Check out the Internet for companies that manufacture such items.
84. **How do you get kids when you don’t have many or any kids?** Children are the future of each of our churches. But what future does a church have if they don’t have any children? Realizing the importance of children, it is vital for every church and Sunday school to have a vibrant, growing children’s ministry. But what happens when you don’t have any children? First, think of things that you can do to create community children’s ministry activities. You might sponsor a community VBS, kidz club, focused Bible study group or after school program. Also, urge individual members to get to know their neighbors and friends who have children. As you get to know the parents you can work to get the entire family involved in your church, Sunday school and Bible study grouops.
85. **Give certificates to your Sunday school teachers who have taught for 5, 10 or 25 years.** One way to say “thank you” to your Sunday school and other Bible study teachers is with a simple, computer-generated certificate. Blanks for such certificates are available at most office supply stores. Certificates can easily be made to include your church name, the teacher’s name and the number of years that they have taught. You might want to give special recognition to persons who have taught for 5, 10 or 25 years or you might want to give a certificate to each of your teachers.
86. **Make a large banner that says, “Thank You Teachers” and display it in your sanctuary or at the entry area of your church.** This is another great way to tell your Bible study and Sunday school teachers that you appreciate all of their hard work.
87. **Sponsor a community revival campaign.** Spiritual revival and renewal are important for the members of your church and for the members of all of the other churches in your area. Why not have your Sunday school class or Bible study group take the lead in planning a series of special revival services for your community. You might talk with persons from other churches in your area to get their help in planning and promoting the event. You might hold the series of services at your church or, in the summertime, hold them at an outdoor location.
88. **Sponsor summer outdoor concerts.** Many communities have outdoor summer concerts at a local park or band shell. If your community does not have such events, why not get your Bible study group or Sunday school class involved in taking the lead to plan and promote the concerts. Use local Christian music groups and choirs. You might take up an offering at each of the events to give to the music groups. In case of bad weather, you might move the event to your church.
89. **Give a small gift to each of your teachers and workers as a part of your “Teachers’ Recognition Sunday.**” You might give each a flower or other small gift. You might have special, larger gifts for those teachers who have achieved certain teaching milestones, like having serviced for 5, 10 or 25 years.
90. **Encourage each of the members of your Sunday school and other Bible study groups to make and give a “thank you” card or note for their teacher.** These could be cards that they have purchased and then personalized or cards that they have made on the computer or with a sheet of construction paper. Encourage the members to give the cards to their teachers on your “Teacher Recognition Sunday.” Parents should be encouraged to help their small children.
91. **Create a “Heart Banner.”** This could be done as a class or department project or by any member who is interested. Give each person who will be involved a heart shaped piece of felt (about 6” across. Ask them to decorate it using fabric paints, glitter, etc. If you wish, you might ask them to include their name. The hearts should then be attached to a large banner. The top of the banner could have wording like “Our Sunday School Has Heart…” Display the banner in a prominent location in your church.
92. **Hold a “Teacher Recognition Meal.**” Again, the purpose of this event is to say “thank you” to your Sunday school and Bible study teachers and workers. You might hold it as a breakfast, a covered dish luncheon or as a banquet at your church or at a local restaurant. If you hold the event at a restaurant, your church might pay the cost for each of your teachers and their spouses. Other persons from your church should be invited but would need to pay their own way. Following the meal, have your pastor or a special guest talk about the importance of being a Sunday school teacher. Give small gifts to the teachers and, perhaps, have special music or other entertainment.
93. **Include Bible trivia questions in your weekly worship bulletin and monthly newsletter.** Bible trivia questions are fun, but they can also be very educational. Use them to help your members discover what they do and don’t know about the Bible.
94. **Create a brochure about your Sunday school and other Bible study programs.** It’s important for every church to have information readily available about all of their programs and activities. When a visitor comes to your church or when members ask about your Christian education program, it’s important to have a brochure about the programs available. Such a brochure should list information about the different classes that you offer, the ages in each class, what each class is studying, special activities and fellowship events that the classes and your Sunday school hold, etc. When the brochure is first completed, distribute them to every member. Following that, make sure that they are readily available in the entry or welcome area of the church.
95. **Hold a community live Nativity program.** Here’s an event that your Sunday school could hold for your church and your community – hold a live Nativity program. Make it more than just a live “scene” by having music, group singing of Christmas carols, the reading of the Christmas story and live actors and animals. Have the event at a designated place and at times that are announced and promoted.
96. **Create a “Video Commercial” for your Sunday school.** This is a project that one of your youth or young adult classes might be interested in. Have them write, produce, videotape and edit a “commercial” about the importance of Bible study and Sunday school, in general, and why people should attend. Once the “commercial” is ready, you might play it for your entire congregation before a worship service or at a special event, like a congregational luncheon.
97. **Create special Bible verse banners and posters.** Does your Sunday school class or Bible study group have a theme Bible verse or do members have particular verses that mean something special to them? If so, why not put these verses on a banner or on posters for everyone to see? Using a computer and your church’s copy machine, it would be quite easy to create such posters and banners in a very attractive, eye-catching and colorful way. Display the posters and banners throughout your church and in your Christian education classrooms. Posters could also be displayed throughout the community with an invitation to your church and Sunday school included at the bottom/
98. **Read the Bible to the shut-ins of your church and community.** Are there persons from your church or community who are no longer able to attend church, Sunday school and other Bible study groups? Perhaps it may even be difficult for these persons to read on their own. To help these folks, you may begin a program to read the Bible, Christian books and other materials to these people right in their homes. Organize a group of older youth and adults who would be willing to contact such persons and then visit and read to them.
99. **Recognize the accomplishments of the members of your Sunday school and Bible study groups.** Earlier we suggested giving certificates and other small gifts to your Sunday school teachers to say “thank you” to them for all of their hard work as a teacher. But don’t forget to say “thank you” and “congratulations” to the other members of your Sunday school and other groups. You might give small gifts to members on their birthday or anniversary. You might give larger gifts to couples celebrating milestone anniversaries like 25 or 50 years. You might give small gifts to children who memorize all of their memory verses or to members of any age who attend every Sunday for a quarter. And you might give certificates of “congratulations” to the children and youth to honor their special accomplishments in school, sports, etc.
100. **Sponsor a workshop or have someone speak in your worship service on the theme of “Sunday School –** **It’s Every Member’s Responsibility.”** Sunday school is not just for the teachers and leaders. Sunday school is for everyone and it is every member’s responsibility. Every member has a responsibility to make a real effort to be a friend to others. They have a responsibility to be well prepared for and to contribute to each week’s Sunday school study and more. A special “mini-workshop” or a sermon on the topic could be of real value as you work to remind every member of your congregation of their personal responsibilities in this area.
101. **Create a “Sunday School or Bible Study Cookbook.”** Every church has many great cooks. Why not ask the members of your Sunday school and other Bible study groups to contribute favorite recipes to be used in creating a cookbook. In addition to the recipes, include information about the value of Sunday school and Bible study. Such a cookbook could be published by an actual cookbook printer or simply run off on your church copier. Church cookbooks are also a great fundraising idea.
102. **Hold weekly or monthly Sunday school services or Bible study classes at a local nursing home.** Many of the folks who are now confined to nursing homes have been faithful Sunday school attendees and workers for many years. I’m sure that many of these people and the other residents of the nursing homes in your area would appreciate having regular lesson presentations right there in the facility where they now reside. Include several familiar songs, scripture, prayer and a short lesson presentation. To schedule such a program, talk with the activities director at your local nursing home.
103. **Create a display of old church and Sunday school photos.** Just about every church has a number of people who always have a camera with them and who are always taking a lot of pictures at special church events and activities. Ask your members to look back through their photo albums and those old shoe boxes of photos to try to find as many old photos of your church and your Sunday school members as they can. Once you have collected a number of these photos, attach them to poster board with removable tape and then put them on display for your entire congregation to see.
104. **Hold a “Sunday School Bumper Sticker Contest.**” This is a great idea for youth and young adults. Everyone is familiar with bumper stickers; you see them on cars every day. Why not get your members involved in a contest to create a bumper sticker that tells about the value of the Bible, Sunday school and/or extend an invitation to Bible study. Give participants a sheet of paper (about 14” x 4”) and then let them get creative. Give a small award to the winners in the different age groups involved. You might even consider having the winning designs reproduced with a color copier onto sticker paper.
105. **Put audio Bibles and books on your church website.** Many of the people who will visit your church website are looking for an inspirational message. Having an audio Bible right on the website is one way to help provide this inspiration. You might place a link for an audio Bible that already exists on the internet on your website or you might have someone from your church or Sunday school read a portion of scripture. These scripture readings might be changed every week so that a new message is there for people to listen to as they return to your website.
106. **Sponsor computer education classes for the senior citizens and others in your church.** Do all of the older adults and others within your church and community fully understand the many great things that you can do with a computer? To help these folks learn how to fully utilize a computer, the internet, social media and all of the other features available through this great technology, you might sponsor computer education classes. You might start with the very basics or you might focus on a specific computer program. You might also help people learn how to use social media as a witnessing and invitation tool.
107. **Ask members to spread your promotional pens throughout your community.** Distributing promotional items such as custom printed pens with your church, Sunday school or Bible study group information printed on it is a great idea. But here’s an unusual idea for distributing the pens: give each of your members one or two of the pens, but tell them that the pens are not theirs to keep. They are to leave the pen someplace where it will be seen by others within the community. For example, use the pen to sign your credit card receipt at a restaurant and then let the pen there or let the pen lay at a bank teller’s window.
108. **Make and share Bible theme crafts.** This is something that children, youth and adults can do. You might create such crafts as a part of your weekly Sunday school or Bible study session or you might have a special group and meeting time to create such items. For example, you might fill small baskets with an artificial flower arrangement and a small paper “flag” that contains a Bible verse. There are, of course, many other things that you might do to create inexpensive but beautiful craft items that could then be given to the residents of a local nursing home or the shut-ins of your community.
109. **Follow up with the kids who attend your V.B.S.** Does your church hold a community Vacation Bible School? If you do, you probably get a number of children from your community whose parents are not members or attendees of your church. Once the Bible school program is over, do you make any efforts to follow up with the children and to contact their families? These are kids who now know you, your church and your teachers. Don’t just let them dissolve back into the community. Make a special effort to invite these families to your church, your Sunday school and other Bible study groups, and to special social events that you sponsor.
110. **Give a small gift to the mothers of your Sunday school on Mother’s Day.** Mother’s Day, Father’s Day and Grandparent’s Day are important days in the lives of many of your members and their families. Use these and other special occasions to recognize these persons in your church and Sunday school. You might give each of these persons a small gift, such as a flower for the moms on Mother’s Day or a pen or bookmark for the dads on Father’s Day.
111. **Organize a church or community meal delivery program.** When you learn of a family that has lost a loved one or where a member has had serious medical problems or an operation, what can your Sunday school class or Bible study group do? One thing that you might consider is to provide meals for the family. Organize a group or committee of persons who will take turns preparing and delivering meals to these families.
112. **Create a “float” to enter in a local parade.** Does your community have parades on special days throughout the year? If your community has a Christmas parade, Veteran’s Day parade or similar event, why not enter a float in the parade to tell everyone all about your Sunday school, your Sunday school class or your Bible study group. You might present a Bible scene or have a group of children and youth. Make sure that the float includes a visual invitation. You might also give away candy treats that include a Bible verse or invitation.
113. **Encourage your Sunday school class groups to march in your local parades.** In the previous article, we talked about entering a float in one of your local parades. Well, you might also encourage the members of your different classes and groups to walk in the parade as a group. They could carry a banner identifying the group and individuals within the group could also carry signs with Sunday school slogans or Bible verses.
114. **Hold a “Room Decorating Contest.**” The room environment in which a class or group meets is extremely important – it can greatly influence the learning experience that takes place. That’s why it is important to have each of your classrooms as bright and inviting as possible. One way that you might encourage teachers and classes to make their rooms their very best would be to hold a “Room Decorating Contest.” Encourage entire classes to become involved in working to clean up, spruce up and decorate their classroom. Classes might be encouraged to use decorations related to their Sunday school lessons or other Bible stories. Give a small award (maybe popsicles for everyone) to the winning class.
115. **Hold a “Sunday School Door Decorating Contest.**” This is a contest that every class can be involved in. The idea is very simple; decorate the door of your classroom related to the suggested holiday or theme for the contest. You might have a “Door Decorating Contest” at Christmas or Easter or centered on the favorite Bible story of the class. Again, give a small award to the winning class and encourage all members of your church to take a tour of your educational building to see the decorated doors.
116. **Organize a class for “singles.”** In many churches, the single adults seem to be almost a forgotten group. If you have a number of young adult singles in your church, why not think about organizing them into a class or Bible study group. In addition to meeting as a class on Sunday morning, you might also encourage the group to hold church and community fellowship events with other singles.
117. **Hold a “Bible Time Meal.**” Here’s an idea for a special Sunday school or church event – hold a meal that features foods that might have been served back in Bible times. Check out the Internet for ideas. This is an event that can be both fun and educational.
118. **How about organizing a church or community “widow’s support group?**” Widows and widowers are another group that are often forgotten in many churches. Your Sunday school might take the lead in organizing a special support group for these folks. They might have regular “support group” meetings to help cope with the loss that they are feeling and you might also encourage them to hold fellowship events and activities, such as going out to eat and to concerts.
119. **Take a good look at the welcome that you are extending to visitors.** I’m sure you are aware how hard it is to get new people to come to your Sunday school or Bible study group. Because it is, you want to be sure that once you get visitors and new attendees in your group, you want to do everything possible to make them feel welcome. Encourage your teachers and the members of each of your classes to pay particular attention to new persons, without making them feel uncomfortable. One of the most important things that people look for in a church is a feeling of community. People want to fit in and have friends in their church. As you work to attract new people to your Sunday school or Bible study group, make sure that you also make a special effort to extend a welcome that is warm and genuine to each new person that comes.
120. **Keep teachers up to date with a yearly calendar of events.** Sunday school and other Bible study teachers and class leaders need to have a clear picture of all of the special activities that are planned for your church for the year, when they will be held and who is to be in charge. Special programs like your Christmas programs, class parties, rally day, promotion Sunday, and others should be listed on a calendar and then distributed to all of your teachers, leaders and members at the start of the year. If you have regular activities that rotate through certain classes, like which class is responsible for having the refreshments for the monthly fellowship time or who is responsible for flowers each week, these things should also be listed.
121. **Observe the second Sunday of February as “Sunday Observance Sunday.”** Do you believe that Sunday is a special day – the Lord’s Day? If you do, then you need to involve the classes and members of your church and Sunday school in calling special attention to the importance of the Lord’s Day and doing all that you can to encourage them to make proper observance of the day. Each year the Lord’s Day Alliance of the United States urges churches across the nation to observe the second Sunday of February as “Sunday Observance Sunday.” On that day, churches and Sunday schools are urged to make a special effort to promote proper observance of Sunday and encourage their members to do the same.
122. **Retell Bible stories through arts and crafts.** Make use of the creative and artistic talents of the members of your Sunday school and Bible study groups by having them create a mural, posters, crafts and other artistic creations as a way of retelling stories from the Bible. Display these creations throughout your church for everyone to see and as another way to get people of all ages interested in the Bible, Bible study and Sunday school.
123. **Create your own Sunday school or Bible study group Internet website.** The Internet is a great tool to use to tell others about what you are doing in your Bible study group or Sunday school. If your church has a website, ask your web master to include a Sunday school page and information about your Bible study groups. If you don’t have a church website, consider starting a site for your Sunday school. Most churches have persons who are very familiar with computers and the Internet, persons who might be able to create such a site for you. Let it be known that you are interested in doing work in this area and ask for volunteers to help you get started.
124. **Sponsor a Sunday school “Family Night Out.**” This might be a night of roller skating, bowling, a group outing to a sporting event or a night at a family movie. Many businesses offer group rates for churches and similar groups. Talk to your members and then plan an event that will promote fun, fellowship and intergenerational contacts between the members of your individual families and your general church family, too.
125. **Sponsor a “Christmas Carol Sing.”** This is an event that can be held in your church or outdoors, on the church lawn or at a community park or other location. The idea is very simple; invite everyone from your church and community to come to the selected location at the time designated to join in singing favorite Christmas carols. You might even have a special musical number or two and a reading of the Christmas story.
126. **Extend the Christmas spirit with a year-round “Sunday School Goodwill Schedule.”** Most Sunday school classes and other Bible study groups are involved each year during the Christmas season with a variety of “goodwill” projects. Why confine these special efforts for helping others only to the holiday season? Encourage each of your classes to work together to plan other projects – maybe even one each month – that will help others. For example, in January you might collect food for your local food bank, in February you might help at an inner-city mission, etc.
127. **Sponsor a “No Excuse Sunday.”** Often when people come back to your Sunday school or other Bible study group after an absence of several weeks or months, they feel that they need to have some type of excuse – I’ve been sick,” “We were away,” or “I had to work weekends.” Well, why not plan to hold a “No Excuse Sunday,” a day when everyone is welcome and invited to come to your Sunday school or Bible study group with “no excuse necessary!”
128. **Create a Sunday school garden.** Is there a location at your church or in your community where you could establish a community garden? Section the garden into plots where individuals or groups (such as Sunday school classes) could have their own little garden. The individuals or groups can harvest the fruits from their plot and use the items themselves, sell or give away.
129. **Sponsor a Sunday school display at community events.** Have you ever thought about the many events that are held in your community – events where there are large gatherings of people, people that need to know more about your Sunday school and Bible study? One idea might be to create a table-top display about the importance of Sunday school and the Christian education programs offered by your church. Make arrangements to have this display used at community events like carnivals, dinners, fundraising events and others. You might consider giving out small, inexpensive gifts, too.
130. **Is the name “Sunday school” a help or a hindrance?** Today many people see Sunday school as an old, outdated program and others see the name “Sunday school” as a “turn off.” Is it? Well, the idea behind Sunday school is certainly not old or out-of-date! Sunday school is as important and as relevant today as it has ever been. (If it’s not relevant and interesting it’s probably the fault of the Sunday school teacher, not Sunday school itself.) And some churches have tried to improve the image of Sunday school by changing the name to something more modern and catchy, like “Sunday Morning Kids’ Club” or “Bible & Fellowship Time.” But does it really make a difference? In his book, “Sunday School that Really Works,” author Steve R. Parr talks about a survey of Southern Baptist Churches that found that changing the name of the program made little or no difference in the attendance at the program – whatever it was called. Good Sunday school programs work…whatever you call it!
131. **Hold a “Sunday School Year Closing Program.”** Many churches hold special closing programs following their annual Vacation Bible School. Why not hold a similar program each year for your Sunday school? You might hold the program in the spring or in August, right before the start of the new Sunday school year in September. Have the different children and youth department classes give a short presentation about what they did and what they learned during the past year. You might also have a display of crafts and other class work for everyone to see.
132. **Select a yearly theme for your Sunday school.** Many times, when churches and other organizations plan special programs, theyselect a “theme” for the event. Themes give direction and unity of purpose to events and activities. In a similar way, a yearly theme for your Sunday school will help give a clearer purpose and direction to your program for the year. Themes such as “Dig Deeper Into The Word In Sunday School” or “Sunday School – Each One Bring One” can be very valuable tools.
133. **Encourage members to write “Letters to the Editor.**” Are there good things happening in your church, Bible study group and Sunday school? One way to share the news is by writing letters to the editor of your local newspaper. These letters are a great way to let your community know about the special things that are happening in your church and Sunday school, and they are also a great way to thank the people of your church and community for their help and support.
134. **Create a drama group.** Are there people in your church and Sunday school who enjoy acting and things related to the theatre arts? If so, why not create a Sunday school or Bible study drama group. This group might present short skits and drama presentations as a part of your regular and special services and they could also produce and present larger plays for your church and community.
135. **Write and present skits about the importance of Sunday school.** In the previous article we talked about creating a Sunday school drama group. This group or one of the children’s or youth classes from your Sunday school might work to write and present skits about the importance of Sunday school. They might also present skits based on Bible stories. Check the Internet for skit scripts or write your own material.
136. **Start a sewing or quilting group.** Are there people in your church who love to sew or quilt? If there are, why not organize them into a sewing or quilting group sponsored by your church. They might make quilts to sell or give to families who have lost their homes to fire or they might make prayer shawls or lap robes for shut-ins or persons in local nursing homes.
137. **Create a “Sunday School or Bible Study Mural.**” Do you have persons in your church who are artistic? Why not get these persons to work together to create a “Sunday School Mural?” You might have a permanent mural painted on one of the walls in your church fellowship hall or it might be painted on a large roll of paper. The theme for the mural might be Bible stories or other lessons that have been learned in Sunday school.
138. **Do you have “Visitor Parking” at your church?** Earlier we talked about the importance of making visitors feel welcome when they come to your church. One of the first things that you can do to welcome a visitor is to provide special “visitor parking” for them. Why not reserve several prime parking spots in your church parking lot for visitors? Put up signs that say “visitor parking” and urge your members to save these special spots for new people who come to your church.
139. **Sponsor a “Community Special Interest Bible Study” group.** What is a “Special Interest Bible Study?” It is a group where half of the time is dedicated to a general interest of the group’s participants – such as weight loss, gourmet cooking, model rocketry, sports card trading, crafts, etc. – and the rest of the time is spent in a Bible study, often related to the general interest topic. Such a group could be sponsored by your Sunday school and held as a community event.
140. **“Ask me what I learned in Sunday school today!**” Children love to learn and they love to tell others what they have learned. So, why not create buttons or stickers that say “Ask me what I learned in Sunday school today!” and give them to your children in Sunday school so that people will ask the kids what they learned.
141. **Create a “Harvest Table.”** Do you have members of your Sunday school or Bible study groups who are great gardeners? Many of these people often have a surplus of produce from their gardens – fruits and vegetables that they often don’t know what to do with. Here’s an idea - create a “Harvest Table.” Invite people from your church and Sunday school who have an abundance of produce from their garden to bring the items and place them on the “Harvest Table.” Then invite others from your church and Sunday school to take what they can use. You might also put a donation basket on the table for persons who take items from the table to leave a small donation.
142. **Start a “Sunday School Tape or CD Ministry.”** Do you have elderly or shut-in members of your Sunday school who cannot attend each week? Don’t forget about these people. Make a special effort to minister to their needs, too. One idea would be to create a “Sunday School Tape or CD Ministry.” To do this, simply record the lesson presentation by one of the teachers of an older adult class. Use a computer to transfer the message to CD and then distribute them to the members of your Sunday school who cannot attend because of sickness or physical limitations.
143. **Create your own “I Love Sunday School” or “I Love The Bible” posters.** Why do the people who now attend your Sunday school or Bible study group love it? Ask them and then use their responses to create simple “I Love Sunday School” or “I Love The Bible” posters. At the top of the poster print words like “Here’s Why I Love Sunday School…” then include a photo of the person with their name, followed by their reason for loving Sunday school. Create posters with people from all different age groups – children, youth and adults. Using your computer, cellphone camera and your church copy machine, you should be able to create very eye-catching posters to tell everyone why Sunday school is important and why they should attend, too.
144. **Hold a quarterly Sunday school emphasis in your worship service.** We recently learned of a church that does this. Four times each year they set aside about 10 to 15 minutes in their worship service to have someone talk about the importance of Sunday school or to have one of the Sunday school classes make a presentation about what they are doing and to invite others to come and join them. They also use this time for things like teacher recognition, recognition of Sunday school perfect attendance and teacher installation. This could also be done for your different Bible study groups.
145. **Sponsor a children’s sports team.** This might be a team of kids from your church or Sunday school, or a team of kids from your community. You might get members involved with the team as coaches or helpers and by supplying refreshments for their games. Be sure to get your church or Sunday school name on the jerseys of the team members.
146. **Use your church sign board to promote Sunday school and your other Bible study groups.** Your church sign board out in front of your church probably lists your pastor’s name and the times for your various services. Many churches also use the sign board to display special messages or invitations to attend special services. You probably have your Sunday school starting time listed on the sign board, but are there any other ways that you could use this message board to extend a welcome or tell people about the importance of Sunday school and Bible study?
147. **Recognize the members of your Sunday school who have had perfect attendance.** Perfect attendance or even missing just one or two Sundays of a Sunday school year is an outstanding accomplishment and should be honored. If you have persons from your Sunday school who have had perfect attendance (or even missed just one or two Sundays) be sure that you make a special effort to recognize them. Give them a small gift and a certificate recognizing their accomplishment. When you plan to present the awards to these special people, the best place to do it is in the worship service.
148. **Don’t let absentees quietly slip away!** What happens in your Sunday school or Sunday school class when someone is absent for several Sundays in a row? Are you concerned? You should be! Far too often people miss a few Sundays here and there and – before you know it – they aren’t coming anymore. You might look around and ask, “where’s Joe?” But no one seems to know. Don’t let anything like that happen in your Sunday school or Sunday school class. If you notice that someone hasn’t been there for more than two weeks, make it your mission to find out why. Give them a call. Drop them a card or an e-mail. Or stop by their home to say “hello.” There may be a reason for their absence that you or your group might be able to help with. Maybe they have been sick or they don’t have transportation. You may be surprised to discover how a simple message of “We miss you!” will keep you from losing these potential dropouts.
149. **Are your teachers really making the best possible use of modern technologies within their classroom?** How are children and youth being taught in today’s public schools? They are using computers, smartboards, video, the Internet, and many other of today’s most effective teaching tools. But what are most teachers still doing in the church classroom? Many are using the same methods that were in use 20, 30 or even 50 years ago! God doesn’t change! The Bible doesn’t change! But the way that we must present this “never changing message” must change! Urge your teachers to look for ways to use more modern technologies and things like “active discovery learning” (learning by doing) in their lesson presentation.
150. **Plan how you can better promote Sunday school and Bible study group attendance and the special programs and activities within your church and Sunday school.** One way to do this would be to create a special “Promotion Committee.” As you plan to promote Sunday school and your special Bible study group activities, remember that there are two general directions that promotion needs to go – in your church and outside your church. “In church” promotion is aimed at the members and regular attendees of your church and Sunday school. “Outside” promotion is aimed at the community at large. The importance of good, effective promotion cannot be overstated. You can have the very best program ever planned, but if no one knows about it, who will attend?
151. **Make greater use of your local newspapers to tell the community about what’s happening in your church and Sunday school.** Newspapers offer a variety of promotional options. Get to know the religious editor at your local newspaper and the various policies related to promoting church events and activities through the paper. Most newspapers will gladly run short articles about special programs and activities that you are planning. Most also have a listed “calendar of events.” If you are having a very special program or activity, talk to the editor about getting them to run a feature article. And don’t forget the “letters to the editor,” classifieds and paid ads, too.
152. **Write a column about the weekly Sunday school lesson for your local newspaper.** Does your local newspaper have a column about the weekly Sunday school lesson topic? If not, why not work with your pastor or another good writer from your church to create such a column. Talk with the religion editor of your paper about the possibility. Although you don’t want to plagiarize copyrighted material, there are a lot of materials available that can aid you in writing such a column.
153. **Tell the young families of your community about what you are doing in Sunday school and other Bible study groups.** What do parents look for when they are “shopping” for a new church? They actually look more at what the church has to offer for their children than what might be offered for themselves. Use every available promotional idea to tell the people of your community about your VBS, kids’ clubs, family activities and fellowship events that your church offers.
154. **Make greater use of your local radio stations.** Most local radio stations offer free public service announcements to nonprofit groups to promote their events and activities. Many Christian stations also have talk shows where they highlight events of area churches. You might also ask local persons who have programs on your local Christian stations to mention your announcements on their programs. To find out how your local stations might be of help to your church and Sunday school, call the station and ask to talk with the Public Services Director.
155. **Distribute “Door hangers” to the homes in your neighborhood.** “Door Hangers” are cards (about 4” x 10”) that are cut so that you can hang them over the outside doorknob of a home. Die-cut “door hanger” card blanks are available at most office supply stores. These card blanks can easily be run through a computer printer or a copy machine to produce “door hangers” with a message of invitation or other message that you want to spread throughout your neighborhood. Once you have the “door hangers” printed, have the members of your Sunday school older youth classes distribute them throughout the area.
156. **Include a “Sunday School Page” or “Bible Study Page” in your church newsletter.** Most churches produce a monthly newsletter to let all members know about what’s happening. A good idea is to include a “Sunday School Page” or “Bible Study Page” in each issue of your church newsletter. On this special page list information about special events and activities that are taking place in your groups, information about what the different classes are doing and studying, etc. You might also highlight a different class each month.
157. **Thank the people in your community for participating in your church and Sunday school programs and events.** When you have any program that involves persons from your community who are not members of your church, be sure to follow up with these persons. Don’t make your follow up some sort of “hard sell” about your church, but rather contact these persons to let them know that you appreciated their attendance and participation and then give them a reminder that they are always welcome at your church, Bible study groups and all of the other programs and services that you have at your church. Personal contacts are always the very best, but if you need to contact a large group, you might send personal letters or e-mails or make a phone call.
158. **Send out “Invitation Postcards.**” Invitation and reminder postcards can be a great tool for the members of your Sunday school and other Bible study groups to use to invite their friends to their group and the special events that you are planning. You might have a general postcard printed for your Sunday school or you might purchase preprinted invitation postcards. When you plan special events like a “Rally Day,” you might also have special invitation postcards prepared for the event. Give each member several cards and urge them to send them to friends. Some groups even place stamps on the cards before they are distributed.
159. **Have “Sunday School Greeters” available to greet visitors.** Most churches have greeters at the doors to hand out bulletins and greet persons as they arrive for Sunday morning services, but what happens when a visitor arrives for Sunday school? These persons often have no idea where they are supposed to go or even what class they are supposed to be in. To handle these situations, you might have special “Sunday School Greeters” available to greet visitors. Have one person at each entrance of the church before Sunday school and several other persons on call. That way the “Sunday School Greeter” can take the time to accompany the visitors to the proper classroom, introduce them to their teacher and help them feel at ease.
160. **Ask each of your classes to create a display about what they are doing.** Earlier we suggested that you consider holding an “Open House” as a way of showing members who do not attend Sunday school or your Bible study groups what’s happening. An alternate idea would be to set up tables in the entry area of your church and let each of the classes set up a display about what they are doing. Include copies of the curriculum materials being studied, crafts and other special projects, etc. The teacher or other members of the class should also be at the table to answer questions and extend an invitation to persons to join the class.
161. **Create a “Sunday School Classroom Map.”** When visitors arrive at your Sunday school, do they know where they are supposed to go? One thing that you might do is to create a “Sunday School Classroom Map.” This is a map of the layout of your church building with the location of classes for different ages and topics listed on it. The map should be displayed in a location where visitors would easily see it when entering your church.
162. **Get “business cards” for your Sunday school and Bible study groups.** Here’s an effective and inexpensive way to promote your Sunday school, Bible study groups and the special events that you are planning – business cards! It’s amazing how much information you can get on one of those little cards! So, why not get cards printed with a general invitation to your Sunday school and individual Bible study groups or a special event that you have coming up. Then give each of your members a few of the cards to share with their friends and others. Check with local print shops and the internet. Very attractive business cards are available for a very low price.
163. **Does your Sunday school have a class for special needs children and others?** This is something that is needed in most churches and most communities. Most churches have classes for all different ages of students, but they don’t have classes for the physically, emotionally and mentally challenged children, youth or adults. God loves each and every one of these persons and He wants each of our churches and all of our members to be concerned for and love each of these persons, too. True, such classes will require some very special leadership and teachers. In many cases, the special needs students will each need their own “teacher.”
164. **Create your own “E-mail Contact List.”** Sending cards and letters to your Sunday school or Bible study group members can get expensive and making phone calls to each person can take a lot of time. What’s the answer? It might be E-mail! Ask each of your members for their E-mail address and then create a “Sunday School E-mail Contact List” as an “address book” in your computer. Then, when you have special news that you want to share with your fellow Bible study group members, simply use your computer to quickly and easily get out the word to everyone.
165. **For the fastest way to contact people, use Text Messages.** In the previous article I mentioned using E-mail to contact the members of your Sunday school or Bible study group. But if you want to reach your members in a way that has proven to get the fastest possible response, use text messages. This is a great way to reach people with prayer requests and messages that need fast response. Most text messages are read within five minutes.
166. **Encourage your Sunday school classes and Bible study groups to each have a mission project.** Every member needs to see that Sunday school and other Bible study groups are about more than just studying the Bible. Another important part is helping others. To do this, encourage each of your Sunday school classes and Bible study groups – from the youngest to the oldest – to get members involved in the support of a class mission project. Small children might bring pennies to fill a jar for missions. Youth classes might hold a fundraising project like a car wash. Older classes might sponsor a fundraising dinner or other event with the proceeds going to missions.
167. **Urge members to let others know that Sunday school and Bible study are important by encouraging them to place Sunday school bumper stickers on their cars.** You might have your own special bumper sticker printed and distributed to your members, or you might look online or at your local Christian bookstore for pre-printed bumper stickers.
168. **Conduct interviews with the members of your Sunday school to ask them why they love the Bible.** This would be a great project for your senior high or young adult classes. You might have class members interview other members – people of all ages – and then print the resulting article in your church newsletter. Another way to do it would be to let the interviewers use a video camera and then put together a video about why the members of your church love the Bible and Sunday school. The video might be shown before worship or at a special church event.
169. **Hold a “Founder’s Sunday” program.** Do the people of your church know about the history of Sunday school and the history of your church and Sunday school? Holding a special “founder’s Sunday” program is one way to share this information with your congregation. Have someone speak about the history of Sunday school and someone else talk about the history of your church and Sunday school. You might also have older members of your Sunday school share memories of Sunday school past. The service might also include traditional Sunday school hymns, poems, etc.
170. **Hold a special “Mission Sunday” program.** As we mentioned earlier, every Sunday school and other Bible study class should be urged to have their own mission projects. Another way of emphasizing the importance of missions to the members of your church would be to hold a special “Mission Sunday” program. On this special day you might have a special missionary speaker and also have reports from each of your classes about their individual mission projects and how much money they have raised for their project.
171. **Create your own “Sunday School Placemat.”** Most churches have a number of special dinners and similar fellowship events at their church. Did you ever look for ways to tell the people at these events about your Sunday school? One idea would be to create your own “Sunday School Placemat.” Simply design a placemat about the importance of the Bible and Sunday school with an invitation to attend your Sunday school and have it duplicated onto 11” x 17” sheets of paper. You will probably be able to do this right in your church office. Print up a supply of the placemats and then have them used each time there is a special dinner at your church.
172. **Start an “Adopt A Grandparent Program.”** Building intergenerational contacts and fellowship within your Sunday school is a concern of many church leaders. One idea might be to start an “Adopt A Grandparent Program” through your Sunday school. For the program, children – especially children who do not have any actual grandparents living in the area – are paired with older adults in your church. The “grandparents” are encouraged to send cards and give small gifts to the child. The older adults might also be invited by the child’s family to join them for dinner or a picnic.
173. **Start an “Adopt A College Student Program.”** Do you live in an area where there are lots of college students? Being away from home can often be a very stressful experience for these college students. One thing that your church might do is to create an “Adopt A College Student Program.” Under this program, families from within your church and Sunday school agree to “adopt” a college student. Students are invited by families to join them occasionally for Sunday lunch and for special events and holidays when the student can’t go home. Even when the student is home, the family agrees to continue to pray for them and to maintain contact by phone, mail and E-mail.
174. **Encourage students to bring their Bibles to Sunday School.** As we mentioned earlier, the Bible is the Christian’s “handbook for life” and our Sunday school and Bible study group textbook. Many times, however, teachers have a problem in getting their students to bring their Bible with them each week to Sunday school. One way that you might encourage this is to have some type of reward program for persons who bring their Bible to class each week over a period of one month or a quarter. You might give them a pen, candy or other special treat as a reward. But don’t just ask students to bring their Bible for show; make sure that they need their Bible and that teachers ask students to get involved and use their Bible to look up and read scriptures, follow along with the lesson outline, etc.
175. **Does your town have a community website?** If it does, be sure to use it to promote your special church and Sunday school events and activities. You might even post information as to why all persons of all ages should be in Sunday school or Bible study each week.
176. **Use a street banner to promote your big events.** Do you have a big Sunday school event coming up? Or do you really want to let people of your community know when your new Sunday school year will be starting and that everyone is welcome to come and get involved? Well, a street banner, located across one of the main streets of your community might be a great way to get out the message. Street banners are not cheap to get made, but they are very effective. One other note: before you do anything, you will need to get permission from your town’s officials to put up the banner and there may be a permit fee involved.
177. **Create a “Sunday School Store Reward Program” for the children’s department of your Sunday school.** The idea of the “Sunday School Store Reward Program” is rather simple. Children earn “points” or coupons for the different things that they do in Sunday school. They might get one point each time they attend. If they attend every Sunday in a month they get a bonus point. They might get one point for bringing their Bible to class. They might get two points if they bring a friend, etc. Then, once a month, the children can have an opportunity to cash in their points at the “Sunday School Store.” Have the store stocked with a selection of items like candy bars, Sunday school message pens and pencils, even books and Christian message T-shirts.
178. **Make a special effort to think about the future of your Sunday school.** Working to make your Sunday school the very best that it can be and then using the most effective methods of promotion are great, but what about the future? Where is your Sunday school and other Christian education programs headed? What would you like to see happen in these programs in the future? What can you imagine your Sunday school being like five years from now? And what can you do to see that you reach the goals that you have set for your Bible study activities in the future? Every church needs to have a definite plan for the ministry and mission of their Sunday school – the goals that they have for their Sunday school for the future and how they will work to attain those goals. Will your Sunday school grow to be even better and more effective over the next several years or will you slowly start to die? To a large degree, the choice is yours! If you want to see your Sunday school grow, there’s no magic formula that will bring about success. If your Sunday school and these other programs are to grow, it will take a lot of commitment, hard work, planning and prayer. It won’t be easy, but with God’s help, it will happen!
179. **Plan a community**-**wide mailing to tell everyone about what’s happening in your church and Sunday school.** Planning a bulk mailing to every mailbox in your local zip code area will require a lot of work and probably won’t be cheap, but it can be a very effective way to get out the word to everyone in your community about the value of Sunday school and the Bible, and what you are doing in your church. If you are interested, start by talking to your local postmaster.
180. **Start a “Puppet Ministry Team” in your Sunday school**. “Puppet Ministry Teams” provide a great opportunity to involve older children, youth and even adults in a great form of ministry in your church and beyond. If you don’t have anyone in your church that is familiar with how such groups work, talk to other churches in your area that have a puppet ministry. A puppet group can present Bible stories and other puppet plays as a part of special church and Sunday school programs. You might even find your group being invited to give presentations in other churches and for special community events.
181. **Plan to hold monthly or quarterly “Teachers’ Meetings.”** To have the very best Sunday school and Bible study groups that you can have, you need the very best teachers possible. Providing regular training opportunities and ongoing resources for all of your teachers is important, but it is also important to hold regular “teachers’ meetings.” Teachers’ meetings provide an opportunity for teachers to discuss concerns and problems, and to share and learn from one another. Sometimes teachers will become discouraged but having an opportunity to talk to other teachers in a teachers’ meeting will be a great help and encouragement.
182. **Give “Temporary Tattoos” to the children of your church.** Here’s an idea that can be a lot of fun and a way to help the children of your church witness about Jesus and the Bible. What are we talking about? “Temporary tattoos.” In most office supply stores you will find “temporary tattoo material” that can be run through your computer’s ink jet printer. (It’s actually a very thin clear plastic sticker.) You print the design of your choice on the sticker and then cut it out and place it on the skin. Give it a try!
183. **Create a “Bible Prayer Garden.”** Earlier we talked about creating a “Sunday School Prayer Walk” at your church. Well, this is a similar idea. But instead of making it a walk where participants stroll as they pray and meditate, the idea here is to create a quiet place – such as a garden setting – where people could simply come, sit on provided benches, and pray and meditate. This should be an area where people could come at any time.
184. **Hold a “Sunday School or Bible Study Planning Retreat.”** Earlier we talked about the importance of planning for the future of your Sunday school. One way that you might do this is to hold a “planning retreat.” This might be a weekend event (Friday night to Sunday noon) or at some other time convenient to your group. Involve as many of the Sunday school and Bible study teachers and leaders and others who are interested in Christian education as possible. Invite an outside pastor or other Sunday school “expert” to lead the weekend discussion.
185. **Create a Sunday school page on your church’s website.** When someone goes to your church’s website, what do they see about your Sunday school and other Bible study groups? Hopefully, they will see information about your Sunday school and Bible study group and when they meet, but beyond that, what are you really telling potential visitors and new attendees? By creating a special page for each of these groups on your website, you can list information about each of the classes, what each class is studying and news about special fellowship and other activities. And be sure to include lots of pictures of the various classes in action.
186. **Use “QR codes” to guide people to the Sunday school page on your church website.** Are you familiar with “QR codes?” You probably see them lots of places. They look like a square with a bunch of little dots inside. When a “QR code” is scanned with the camera on a smartphone, it will take you to a particular internet website or page on a website. Once you have created a Sunday school or Bible study page for your church’s website, talk with the webmaster about linking it to a “QR code.” Then display the code on your printed materials, church worship bulletins and promotional materials so that people can go directly to these pages on your church’s website. Free “QR codes” are available from the Internet.
187. **Use T-shirts to promote your Bible study group, Sunday school and your special events.** Printed message T-shirts are really walking billboards. If you want to promote your Bible study group, Sunday school or special Sunday school events, why not consider using printed message T-shirts to help with the promotion. You might let members of the children and youth classes use fabric paints or markers to create their own designs or you might use your computer to create a design that could be transferred to the T-shirts. Most office supply stores have heat transfer material that can be run through your computer’s ink jet printer. Once the material is printed, you simply use an ordinary iron to transfer the design right on a T-shirt.
188. **Rent a “Lawn Sign” to promote your special events.** You’ve probably seen them all over your town – those portable lawn signs with interchangeable letters that are used by businesses and organizations to promote sales, special events and more. When you have a special event coming up, why not plan on renting one of these portable lawn signs to help get out the word. These portable signs are available through local rental centers. Many of these stores will even transport the sign to your location and set it up for you.
189. **Encourage each of your Sunday school classes to select a name.** Do the members of each of your Sunday school classes really feel “ownership” of their class? One way to help promote this is to urge various groups within your church to select names for their classes. Catchy names like “The B.L.A.S.T. Class” (Believers Like A Second Time) can help build unity and participation within the class. You might also give students a “membership card” or get membership buttons and T-shirts printed that have a message like “I’m a part of the B.L.A.S.T. class!”
190. **Equip the children of your church and community to go back to school.** We know a church that holds a community block party each August. They have free food, games and they give away fully stocked school backpacks to the kids of their church and community. It takes them a lot of work to raise the money and get donations needed to pack the backpacks, but they report that it is really worth it. It makes sure that all of the kids of the community have the necessary supplies to head back to school and it is a great community outreach gesture. Plus, it has helped them grow their Sunday school and church, too.
191. **Sponsor “Witness Wear Wednesday” in your church and community.** Many of the members of your church probably wear a lot of message T-shirts. Many of these shirts probably display great Christian witness messages. As an organized program, why not urge everyone to wear these “witness shirts” each Wednesday. You might call it “Witness Wear Wednesday.”
192. **Sponsor a community “Kid-Safe” program.** Are you familiar with the national “Kid-Safe” efforts to register the fingerprints and photos of children to help keep them safe? Such programs are carried out by local police departments, but they need community groups that will help organize and promote the local event. Talk with your local police department and ask how you could work with them to conduct such a program in your area.
193. **A personal invitation is still best.** Throughout this article we have been talking about a lot of different ideas and suggestions for promoting your Sunday school and for inviting others to come to your church, Bible study group and Sunday school. All of these ideas are good, but do you know the best and more effective form of promotion and invitation? Personal, one-to-one contacts that your members have with their friends, neighbors, coworkers, family members and others. It’s important to remind the members of your church and Sunday school of the responsibility that they have in telling others about why they love the Lord and about the special events and activities that you are planning. Remember, if each of your members can invite and get just one new person to come to your Sunday school, you could potentially double your attendance.
194. **Plan a “Sunday School Kick-Off Rally.”** It’s important to get your new Sunday school year off to a great start in September. One way that you might do this is to hold a “Sunday School Kick-Off Rally.” This might be a special event on the Saturday evening before the start of the new Sunday school year or at some other time. One idea is to have an outdoor kick-off event – sort of like a pep rally for Sunday school. You might even have a bonfire or a hot dog roast. Have someone lead Sunday school or praise choruses. The youth or children might present a skit about Sunday school. Introduce the “coaches” and “players” (teachers, leaders and members of the different classes) of your Sunday school. And, have someone give a rousing talk to the group about the importance of Sunday school.
195. **Organize a “Tele-Care Program” within your Sunday school.** Do you have people from your church who are confined to their homes – elderly, disabled or sick individuals? Maintaining regular contact with each of these persons should be seen as an important part of your church’s ministry. One thing that you might do is to organize a “Tele-Care Program” within your church or Sunday school. Under the “Tele-Care Program,” members of your church take turns calling the members who are confined to their homes. Not only will this give you an opportunity to maintain contacts with these homebound persons, but it will also give each of these persons a greater feeling of security knowing that someone cares and has taken the time to just call and talk for a few minutes.
196. **Encourage each of your classes to provide refreshments during the Sunday school hour.** We are often asked about whether or not it’s okay to have refreshments during Sunday school. We think that this is not just a good idea, but something that every class should be encouraged to do. For adults, refreshments are a Sunday substitute for the weekday coffee break. And, for children and youth, a snack during Sunday school gives them a midmorning energy boost and also provides a “focusing break” where teachers can take a short break from the lesson, share the snack with the class and then get the group refocused on the remaining lesson. Snacks need not be elaborate, but they should be healthy. It’s a good idea to talk to parents of children and youth about snacks that they would consider acceptable and if any of the children have any food allergies.
197. **Sponsor a special community Bible study.** Sunday school doesn’t just have to take place at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday morning. Your Sunday school might also hold Bible study programs at other times and other places throughout the week. And, if you hold these groups at locations other than your church – such as at a local restaurant, a community center or even a member’s home – they might be even more appealing as community events. When you plan such an event, try to focus the study on a topic that will be of special interest to potential participants.
198. **What are you doing to ensure the safety of every person who comes to your church and Sunday school?** Classroom safety is – or should be – an important topic for consideration within every church. You meet to conduct background checks for all current and potential teachers and workers. Each of your teachers should also be aware of the many issues involved in maintaining safe situations in the classroom. This is not just for the protection of the students, but also for the protection of your teachers, too. Many insurance companies offer training in this area. And, if your church conducts such a safety program, you might also qualify for lower liability insurance rates.
199. **Plan a “Flip-Flop Sunday.”** The idea of a “Flip-Flop Sunday” is to reverse your usual service times – holding the worship service in the time slot where Sunday school usually is held and holding Sunday school at the time when your worship service is usually held. And, yes, this is a planned event – you don’t just surprise everyone with the change – you make sure everyone is aware of what you are doing. The reason for holding a “Flip-Flop Sunday?” Often people will say that they can’t attend one service or the other because it is too early or too late. Well, on “Flip-Flop Sunday,” that’s an excuse that they won’t be able to use.
200. **Hold a “Teacher Training Dinner” to honor and instruct your teachers and leaders.** Churches often find it difficult to get their volunteers to come to workshops and other training events; people are just so busy! One of the best ways to get people to come to an event of any kind is to tie it to food! Holding a “Teacher Training Dinner” can be a great way to get the teachers and leaders of your Sunday school to come out for a good meal. While they are there, honor them and say “thank you” by presenting them with small gifts. And, while you have the teachers gathered together, have a short teacher training presentation about modern teaching methods, the importance of making a greater commitment to being a teacher, etc.
201. **Remind your adult Sunday school classes of the importance of having class officers.** The teacher is the “shepherd” of the Sunday school class. However, it’s important for classes to realize that not every job or every responsibility within the class should be handled by the teacher. To be their best and most effective, each adult Sunday school class should have a president, treasurer, host and hostess, missionary chairperson and other officers to help plan and carry out the work of the class.
202. **Create your own “Bible Bookmark.”** Today it’s very easy to create a very professional looking bookmark that can carry information about the Bible, Bible study and Sunday school and an invitation to your Sunday school or Bible study group program. Use your computer to print the message of your choice onto sheets of index card. Then take these card sheets to your local office supply store and have them laminated. Once they are laminated you can easily cut them into the proper size for a bookmark. If you wish, punch a hole in the top of the bookmark and attach a ribbon. Distribute the bookmarks to all of the members of your church and place them in the Bibles and hymnals within the pews of your sanctuary.
203. **Use “Sunday School Stickers” as rewards and to create your own customized Sunday school promotional items.** If you visit the children’s section of your local Christian bookstore, you’ll see that there are literally hundreds of different Bible and Sunday school stickers available. You might purchase and give out these stickers to the children of your Sunday school as rewards. Another idea is to use these stickers to create your own customized Sunday school promotional items. For example, you might place the stickers on the sides of Styrofoam cups to make cups that carry a Sunday school message. Or, you might place cookies or pretzels or other treats in a small plastic bag and then decorate the bag with Sunday school stickers to make your own invitation treat.
204. **Give your members the “tools” that they need to witness and invite others to your Sunday school and other Bible study groups.** It’s often quite hard to get members involved in witnessing and inviting others to come to your church and Sunday school, but one thing that you might do to help is to provide postcards, tracts, business cards and other “invitation tools” for your members to use. As you make these items available to the members of your church, you should also give everyone ideas for things that they could do to use the “tools” effectively.
205. **Hold a class in witnessing and invitation.** How do most people come to your Sunday school? Statistics tell us that, in the average church, over 70% of the new people who come to the church come at the invitation of friends. Are your members telling their friends about their love for Jesus Christ and Sunday school? The two reasons most often given for why people don’t witness to others and invite them to church and Sunday school are that they are either afraid or don’t know how. Holding a class in witnessing and invitation can be a great way to overcome both of these concerns. Check with your Christian bookstore. There are several very good books and training programs available on the subjects of witnessing and invitation. You might hold such a class as a Sunday school elective or as a special Bible study course.
206. **Give your announcements extra emphasis by making them with drama, puppets, etc.** Important announcements often get lost in the flood of other announcements that are included in your weekly church bulletin or that are read by the pastor or superintendent. One way to make your announcement stand out is to present it in some unusual or catchy way. You might use puppets or put the words in a song. You might even present it through a short skit or video. Anything that you can do to make your announcement stand apart and be noticed will help you do an even better and more effective job of promotion.
207. **Start a “Kids’ Club.”** One of the hottest ideas in marketing to children today is the “Kids’ Club.” With a little imagination and effort, many of the “Kids’ Club” ideas can be added to a children’s Bible study program to make it more interesting and exciting. You might have club membership cards. Give the club a catchy name. For example, the “(church name) R.A.T.S.” (the Right And Truthful Servants). Create a logo and slogan for the club. You might get identical T-shirts for the club members to wear. And sponsor monthly club activities such as pizza parties, softball games, family picnics, etc.
208. **Think of unusual ways that you can make printed announcements.** Earlier we talked about ways that you could use things like drama and puppets to make your live announcements special. You also need to think about ways to make your printed announcements stand out from the crowd. Here are several ideas: Print your announcement on a small piece of paper and then wrap the paper around a miniature chocolate bar. Or place the announcement in an unusual container – maybe a small plastic pill bottle. To be effective, your announcements and your publicity need to get noticed. Look for ideas to make your message special, eye catching and as effective as possible.
209. **Urge your adult classes to sponsor regular social and fellowship building events.** These might be things like eating out at a local restaurant, having a party or watching a family movie at the church. These events might be just for the class members or their entire families. One thing that should always be done, however, is to encourage each of the class members to invite their friends to come with them to the event. Many times, new people are much more willing to attend a social event than they are to go to Sunday school or a worship service. These special events also help to build a network of friendship, fellowship and support among the members of the class.
210. **Sponsor a class or workshop on how to lead a person to Christ.** One of the most important duties of every Sunday school teacher is to – on a regular basis – present opportunities within the class for members to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. Many times, teachers are reluctant to do this because they don’t really know what to do. To help ease these concerns, you might consider holding a class for teachers and all other interested persons on how to lead a person to Christ.
211. **Make your summer program special by holding V.B.S. during Sunday school.** Many churches are finding it increasingly difficult to get people to attend Sunday school during the summer months. One thing that you might do is to hold Vacation Bible School during Sunday school. This is not meant to be a substitute for your regular V.B.S. program, but rather a way of using the same type of special program and exciting, fun-filled ideas to make your summer Sunday school better and more interesting. You might consider purchasing a separate V.B.S. program or you might use some of your old V.B.S. materials from past years. A ten-day V.B.S. program can easily be stretched to fill most of the summer. Many new V.B.S. programs also now have materials available for youth and even adults that could be used to bring the same summer excitement to these departments within your Sunday school.
212. **Have you created any new Sunday school classes or Bible study groups recently?** One of the best and most effective ways to bring about Sunday school growth is by creating new classes. One of our goals should be to see close, supportive relationships develop between class members. But sometimes this goes too far! Classes can become “cliquish” and not really be open to allowing new members into the group. That’s why it’s a great idea to create new classes.
213. **Looking for even more ideas?** **Check out the Internet.** Pinterest.com is an outstanding source for Bible learning games, lesson ideas, Bible craft ideas and much, much more that can be used to make Sunday school even better and more effective. And there are many other sites on the Internet that can provide help and support for your teachers. Check it out!
214. **Urge your teachers to use YouTube videos to get their lessons off to a great start.** Did you know that the YouTube search engine is second in use only to Google? Using their search feature you can find music videos, Bible story videos and videos on just about any theme or topic that you could imagine. To help your teachers get their lessons off to a great start and to promote involvement and discussion, urge them to make use of the millions of videos available. You might also urge them to get a free “YouTube downloader program” from the internet so that they can transfer the video to their computer and use it with their lesson in the classroom.
215. **Create a “Coffee Shop Table” to raise funds for your Sunday school or mission project.** It’s an idea that is appearing in more and more churches. People who arrive for morning services – many of whom haven’t had any breakfast – can buy a bagel, a donut and glass of milk or juice right at the church. Charge the going rates for the items and use the profits from the weekly sale to support your Sunday school or mission project. The “Coffee Shop Table” could open 30 minutes before the start of services and between worship and Sunday school. It might be manned by older youth or members of adult classes; a different class might be responsible for helping each week. Not only will the “Coffee Shop Table” help to provide some quick nutrition for hungry members, but it can also be a good fundraiser and, as the people stand around in your church lobby or fellowship hall and talk, you’ll be promoting fellowship and friendships, too.
216. **Give your teaching moms a break on Mother’s Day.** Wouldn’t it be a nice idea to give your Sunday school teachers who are mothers a break from teaching on Mother’s Day? One idea would be to recruit men, older teens and college age youth to take over for your “moms” for the day. You might also hold a combined program for your children’s classes on Mother’s Day. Have videos or a special guest such as a Christian magician for the special program.
217. **Give away candy bars with an attached invitation message label.** Earlier we talked about giving away bottles of water with an attached invitation or special message label. This is a similar idea but doing it with candy bars. Create a special “over-wrapper” with your Sunday school invitation or other message printed on it and then attach this label over the candy bar’s wrapper.

**Fund Raising Ideas…**

1. Car Wash
2. Sandwich Sale
3. Sub Sandwich Sale
4. Salad Sale
5. Pizza Sale
6. Candy Bar Sale
7. Candy Sale (candy your group has made)
8. Cookie Sale
9. Cookie Sale (cookies your group has baked)
10. Rent-A-Teen (Teens are “rented” to mow grass, shovel snow, etc.; this can also be done with adults.)
11. Restaurant Share-the-Profits Nights (Members who eat at the host restaurant on a given day have a percentage of their bill given to the charity.)
12. Supermarket Gift Cards (Many supermarkets will sell nonprofit groups gift cards at a discount. The group sells the cards at face value and keeps the difference.)
13. Gift Card Sales (Same idea as in #12 but for other businesses)
14. Collect gift cards (Unused gift cards can be sold over the internet.)
15. Collect aluminum cans
16. “Quarter-Mile of Quarters” fund raising drive. (Place quarters side-by-side on a strip of tape – sticky side up. (A yard of quarters is about $9.50. A quarter mile of quarters would be over $4,300.)
17. Hold a benefit auction of items donated by area businesses and members of your church.
18. Hold a benefit concert.
19. Hold a benefit movie night.
20. Hold a benefit dinner at your church.
21. Craft sale
22. Yard sale or flea market (Charge for each table rented and/or an percentage of all sales.)
23. Sell Christmas cards.
24. Sell Christmas and other gift items.
25. Bake sale
26. Soup sale
27. Food sales of other types
28. Seek out corporate and business sponsors.
29. Some projects may even qualify for government support.
30. Send financial appeal letters to members, friends, businesses, etc.
31. Send a financial appeal letter through a bulk mailing to everyone in your town, on your mailing list, etc.
32. Hold a book sale.
33. Seek donations from other groups and organizations of your community (unions, masonic and fraternal groups, fraternities, etc.)
34. For your very special projects, seek a grant from a charitable foundation.
35. Hold a carnival.
36. Dunk tank
37. “Buy-A-Brick” and similar programs
38. Cutest pet vote. (Charge a fee to enter a photo of a person’s pet in the competition. Set up the display of the photos with a donation can with each. Persons vote for their favorite by placing a donation in that pet’s donation can. The winner gets a small prize or a small percentage of all money raised. Have the display at a mall or busy area business.)
39. Cutest baby vote. (Same idea as #38.)
40. Homemade ice cream sale.
41. Best chili contest. Cooks pay a small fee to enter their pot of chili in the contest. Persons purchase a small sample of chili for about $.25 each. Then then vote for their favorite. Winning cook gets a small prize.
42. Best brownie or cake contest. (Similar to #41.)
43. Sell ads and/or patron listings for in your program booklet, etc.
44. Seek sponsors for specific parts of your program. (For example, if you are holding a benefit concert, you might find businesses or companies that will pay the fees involved with specific groups or they will pay for the programs and printing. Be sure to list all sponsors somewhere with small signs or a mention in your program booklet.
45. Seek memorial gifts in memory of persons from the community or your church.
46. Flower sale (You might sell flowers directly to the public at Easter or Mother’s Day, or you might take orders for flowers that will be placed in your church as decorations at Christmas or Easter. These flowers are often placed “in memory” or “in honor” of someone. Following the service, the purchaser may take the flowers home.)
47. Button sale (Badge-a-Minit and other companies make small machines that can be used with your computer to produce quality, professional-looking buttons and badges.)
48. Seek gifts in honor of persons from your community or church.
49. Community savings coupons, books & cards
50. Community and church birthday calendars. (Persons pay a small fee to place each name on the calendar and then the calendars are sold.)
51. Placemat ad sales. (Use the placemats in your church, at community events, and give them to area restaurants.)
52. Read-a-thon (This is usually done by children or youth. Ask sponsors to pay so much per book, per chapter, etc. for what the kids read. This could be done with the Bible or other books.)
53. Community Walks/Run (Persons who enter seek sponsors who agree to pay so much per mile that they walk.)
54. Community Dances
55. Sell lawn signs or posters.
56. Hold training classes. (Charge a fee for persons to attend cooking class, computer class or other training event.)
57. “Turn An Investment Into A Donation!” (Give each member of your class or group a small amount of money – say $10.00 Tell them that they are to “invest” this money and see how much they can make with it. For example, they might use the money to buy ingredients to bake cookies and then sell the cookies where they work. That $10.00 investment could easily be quickly turned into $100.00 or more for the group.)
58. Hold a sales party. (Home sales parties for things like jewelry, perfume and Tupperware are great ways to earn money for your group.)
59. Hold a whoopee pie or cookie sale.
60. Hold a “silent auction.” (There’s even an app to help with such a sale. Go to biotech.com)
61. Hold a T-shirt sale.
62. Hold a battery sale. (Go tointerstatebatteries.com for information.)
63. Check out websites such as abcfundraising.com, easy-fundraising-ideas.com and fundraising-ideas.org.
64. Cookie dough sale
65. Flower bulb sale
66. Popcorn sale
67. Coffee & tea sale
68. Bus trips. (Add a percentage to the actual costs to make a profit on the trip.)
69. Sell slices of ice-cold watermelon at summer sporting events and activities.
70. “Sunday Morning Breakfast.” (Set up a table in the lobby or fellowship hall of your church and sell donuts, bagels, juice, etc. before your Sunday morning services.
71. Skip Something For the Cause.” (The idea here is to ask your members and friends to skip a movie, a lunch, a soda or whatever and then have them give the amount of money that they would have spent for that movie or meal and give it to the project.
72. “Fund Raising Calendar.” (Create a calendar and on each day list a different “charge.” For example, “donate $.25 for each cup of coffee you drink today” or “donate $.05 for each mile that you drive in your car today” or “donate $.10 for each candle that you have displayed in your home.”)
73. “Memorize-a-Thon” (Get the children and youth of your church to commit to memorize as many scripture verses as they can in a week. Have the kids find sponsors who will agree to pay a certain amount for each verse that they learn.)
74. Valentine’s Day balloon sale. (Sell bunches of helium filled balloons and deliver them on Valentine’s Day.)
75. Parents’ Night Out (Offer babysitting service at your church on a set evening for a donation.)
76. Face Painting
77. Computer Labels (Use your computer to create return address and mailing labels to sell.)
78. “Spud Day” (Create a baked potato bar with other donated food items as a lunch following your Sunday morning services. Charge an admission.)
79. Hold a Fun Fair. (Have games, music and food for sale.)
80. Sell Easter and Christmas baskets that you assemble yourself from donated or purchased fruits, candies and other items.
81. Sell Smoothies. (Create a smoothie stand to sell these refreshing drinks at your church, community events, sporting events, etc.)
82. Offer gift wrapping services in cooperation with a local store and mall.
83. Create and sell a church or community cookbook.
84. Ask members and friends for monthly credit card donations. (Does your church or group have the ability to accept credit card sales and donations? If so, you should be able to set up automatic monthly billing that would allow your friends and supporters to give an automatic monthly donation to your group.)
85. “Make the Grade.” (Have the students of your church seek sponsors for the good grades they will get on their report card – so much for each “A” and “B” that they get. Oh yes, the money goes to the project, not the kid.)