

Sunday School



it's for life!

• life-giving

• connected  
to the Source  
of life

• about real life

• life long



**Cokesbury**

helping to teach  
the transforming love  
of Jesus Christ

# Sunday School—It's for Life! Helps for Video Discussion

## Preparation

1. Prepare for the group by setting up the room so that conversation/discussion can take place and that the VHS/DVD player is visible by everyone.
2. In advance of the gathering, select five to seven of the questions below that are suited to your particular group and use them to guide the discussion.
3. If the people in the group do not all know each other, begin with introductions, asking each person to tell one brief memory they have of Sunday School, or something they value from their current experience of Sunday School. If the group is very large, do this in smaller groups, preferably five or six.
4. Open with prayer.
5. Show the video.
6. Lead the group in discussing the questions below.
7. If appropriate and time allows, consider the Next Steps section below to begin creating an action plan for new Sunday School classes.
8. Close with a time of worship.

## Discussion Questions

For All Groups

1. Cast the vision.
  - a. Why did the speakers say the Sunday School matters? Here are some quotes that you can use to spark conversation.

**Joan Walker says:** *I like to see kids having fun and learning, hearing about Jesus, hearing about God, how all those things can intertwine in their lives, and if I can make sure that they go home with that, which I think they do, that's my excitement and that's my passion!*

**Scott Jones says:** *You have to remember why do we do this, and the why becomes very important. Sometimes people are going through Sunday School just because we've always done it that way. But when you connect it up with the mission of the church and realize that Sunday School is one of our best tools at making disciples of Jesus Christ, then all of a sudden you begin to say: "Oh! Maybe it's worth doing . . . maybe it's worth doing better than we're doing it!"*

**Bishop Clay Lee says:** *There is a direct relationship between a church that has a strong Sunday School and whether that church itself seems to have real strength and real spirit, real life.*

**“Sunday School  
is one of our  
best tools  
for making  
disciples of  
Jesus Christ.”  
–Rev. Scott  
Jones**

**“Pastors...  
Don’t be  
invisible.”  
–Rev. Kevass  
Harding**

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**The Narrator says:** *When we as leaders give attention to Sunday School, reminding ourselves of its value and potential, we’ll have more new classes, we’ll have more new teachers, and we’ll draw more people into deeper relationships with God and with each other, so that we can give witness to God’s purpose in the world.*

- b. Does one or more of these statements resonate with you?
  - c. Who else in your setting thinks this is important OR who else could/must you enlist to make a focus on the Sunday School real and vital in your setting?
2. The video shows persons’ lives being transformed.
    - a. What examples did you see in the video of how the lives of persons involved in Sunday School are being transformed?
    - b. What are some ways that you see individuals of all ages (children, youth, young adults, middle adults, older adults) in your community of faith being transformed by God through the Sunday School?
    - c. How can we encourage and support this kind of transformation?
  3. Our video emphasized the importance of the pastor’s role in the Sunday School.
    - a. In a group that contains a significant number of clergy, you might ask: What is the impact when the pastor is supportive and active in the Sunday School? (Can you give examples?)
    - b. List ways that pastors can provide support and contribute to the vitality of the Sunday School.
    - c. For district or conference meetings: How might we communicate with pastors about this on the district or in our conference?
    - d. For meetings within a congregation or charge: If your pastor is present in the group, ask him or her to talk about ways he or she feels able to support the Sunday School. If your pastor is not present, how might you enlist his or her support for this effort?
  4. The video gives examples of Sunday School receiving support from lots of places within the church.
    - a. What is the role of the district and conference in supporting the Sunday School, starting new Sunday Schools, and revitalizing declining Sunday Schools?
    - b. For district and conference meetings: What are some new ideas of ways our district (or conference) can be engaged in these activities?
    - c. For local church council:
      - What can our church do to make the Sunday School more alive and relevant to the lives of children, youth, and adults and to emphasize the importance of the Sunday School in helping us all grow as Christian disciples?

-Do we know what resources the district and conference provide for supporting the Sunday School? How can we find out what is available, make use of those resources, and envision with others who would support our efforts in helping Sunday School be a vital center for forming disciples in our church?

5. The video emphasized that starting new classes is a key to growth for the Sunday School. Think about some people you know who are not currently in a Sunday School class.
  - a. What needs or concerns do you think they have that Sunday School might address? What might you have to do to find out?
  - b. Discuss the steps for creating a new Sunday School class. Steps outlined below may suggest items to be included.
  - c. For district or conference teams: How can we help our congregations start new classes? Do they need encouragement? Training?

## *Setting goals*

For District and Conference Groups

One conference leader shared their goal to start 2100 new Sunday School classes in that conference. Divide into small groups and brainstorm, then come back together to share.

- a. Given that our larger goal is to make disciples for Jesus Christ, what do you think of this goal? Would it help us if we had a similar goal for our district or conference?
- b. Consider the possibilities! Who could set this goal? Who would we need to enlist to move in that direction? What could we do to make this happen?
- c. What other ways could we share a vision of what Sunday School is and what it can become that will inspire clergy and lay leadership?
- d. How can we share our "success" stories—stories about God at work in Sunday School classes?
- e. How can we better support teachers and leaders of the Sunday School in our conference/district?
- f. How can we see that quality training is available?

## *Planning*

For Local Church Planning Groups

1. Using the steps outlined below, work in small groups to actually plan a new class for your church.
  - a. Choose the age level, think of the persons who need to be invited, and proceed to vision this new class!
  - b. What are the needs of the group you are thinking about?

**On the video, Carolyn Anderson says:** *"I think a lot of times people coming to Sunday School, cannot articulate what they are looking for, but they know something is missing from their lives."*

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## ***Teachers make a difference.***

2. Effective teachers are those who claim and live the promises of God in their own lives, then share the promises through their teaching and their living.
  - a. How does your congregation help teachers claim and live God's promises for themselves?
  - b. How does your district/conference help?
  - c. What are some ways that you could increase this kind of support for teachers?

### For Teachers

- a. Why do you teach?
- b. Where do you find support for your teaching?
- c. What opportunities are there in your congregation for teachers to share their own faith journeys with one another? to share their joys and challenges in teaching?
- d. What could your congregation/district/conference do to more effectively support and encourage your teaching ministry?

### **NEXT STEPS - The Who, What, Where, When, and Why of Starting a New Class**

1. Who are we trying to reach and how will they be invited?
  - a. What would they need to receive for the Sunday School class to meet their needs (new friends? a place to deal with life issues like parenting or caring for elderly family members or....? a group that wants deeper Bible study? a setting to talk about challenging ethical issues? a group that might work on pressing issues of local, national, or global policy?)
2. Who could teach? (Ask children, youth, and adults to suggest people they would like to have teach them. If those people are not already teaching, ask them if they would consider teaching. Tell them that someone has "recommended" them.)
3. What will be taught?
  - a. For children, identify possible curricula.
  - b. For youth and adults consider a survey of interests and needs.
  - c. For samples and ideas, go to [www.sundayschool.cokesbury.com](http://www.sundayschool.cokesbury.com), click samples, or call Curric-U-Phone J.
4. Where will the class(es) be held?
  - a. Be sure to reserve the space for the classes. Make it easy to find!
  - b. Plan ways to make the room or other space inviting.
5. When will teacher recruitment be completed?
6. When will teacher training be done? Check out the courses available on-line at Cokesbury Academy.
7. When will the class begin? Plan a kickoff celebration.
8. When will students be invited? Personal invitations are best, with a follow-up invitation in print and as many other media as you can think of—repetition helps!

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### **Why? It's for Life!!**