PLAN FOR TEACHING A SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

A practical guide for pastors, elders, and Sunday School teachers

It is vitally important for children to learn about their Savior and His Word. While the primary responsibility for Christian education lies with parents, Lutheran churches have long had the excellent practice of assisting parents through weekly Sunday School lessons. This prepares children for a lifelong love of God's Word and for their confirmation instruction.

If your congregation does not already have a Sunday School program, you can begin one using the CLC God's Hand in Our Lives curriculum: godshand.clclutheran.org.

> YOU HAVE JOYFUL WORK TO DO.
> "Let the little children come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." - Matthew 19:14
> Let your joy show as you teach the children about Jesus.

1. PRAY

You will be bringing the Word of God to young listeners. You need the guidance of the Holy Spirit, wisdom from God's Word, and the ability to reach the hearts of the children.

2. STUDY

Look up the story in the Bible itself and think about its meaning verse by verse. Look up other Bible passages that teach the same truths. If the story is repeated elsewhere in Scripture, such as in another Gospel, compare both accounts. Use a good teacher's guide or other helps when available. Helpful teachers' notes for many Old and New Testament stories are available at godshand.clclutheran.org.

3. PLAN

Organize your thoughts so that your students receive the clearest message and remember what they have learned. After studying the story, ask and answer these questions:

A. What is the OUTER aim?

The outer aim is the facts about what happened. Example: "Jesus showed His power as the Son of God when He fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fish."

B. What is the INNER aim?

The inner aim is the meaning of the story for each Christian. Example: "Because Jesus has the power to feed 5,000 people, He has the power to take care of all my needs, especially my need for a Savior from sin."

C. What is the message of the LAW?

The Law is what God expects from us and the punishment that comes from breaking His Law. The Law shows that we are guilty of sin.

> "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23

D. What is the message of the GOSPEL?



The Gospel is the good news about what God has given us in Jesus. By grace He has given us full forgiveness and eternal life because of Jesus' death in our place and His resurrection.

> "And are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Romans 3:24

E. What does this story teach about FRUITS of faith?

Because of God's love to us in Christ, Christians want to live lives that please God. What does the story teach about the life we now live as God's children?

> "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing." John 15:5

F. Keep LAW and GOSPEL at the heart of the lesson

Focus on Law and Gospel first, with the greatest emphasis on the Gospel. The biggest mistake teachers make is teaching only rules and morals: "God wants you to be good children. Here is a Bible story showing you how to be good. God loves children who are obedient."

Instead, show the children God's Law - His commandments, our guilt, and the punishment for sin. This prepares the heart to hear the Gospel - God's free gift of forgiveness and life through faith in Jesus. Only the Gospel brings faith to a child's heart. God's great love because of Jesus then gives the best reason for children to show real fruits of faith.

4. TEACH THE CLASS

These are suggestions; not every class will follow them in exactly this order.

1. Open with a prayer and a Christian song for children.
2. Review last week's lesson. Ask what the students learned. Have them recite their memory passages and say them aloud together.
3. Tell a story as an introduction. Use another Bible story or an imaginary story that explains the same lesson as the inner aim. Tell the children they will learn that same truth from today's Bible story.
4. Tell the Bible story. Know it well enough to tell it clearly with the details found in Scripture. Speak directly to the students rather than merely reading. Look at every child. Help them remember the facts - the outer aim - and ask questions so that they know who was involved and what happened.
5. Have the students tell the story back to you. Begin the story, then ask, "What happened next?" or "What did he say then?" Ask why questions. This review teaches the inner aim. Another option is to present the story as a play, assigning students the different roles and asking the why questions as you go.
6. Finish by asking about the facts - the outer aim. Then ask about the meaning - the inner aim. Finally, explain what Christians now want to do because of the lesson - the fruits of faith.
7. Have the students complete a coloring page or craft if materials are available.
8. Give the students one or more Bible passages to memorize for the next class. Read them aloud together and explain their meaning.
9. End the Sunday School class with a Christian song and a prayer.

Teach the facts faithfully. Bring the meaning home clearly. Above all, let the Gospel of Christ remain at the heart of the lesson.