



Sunday School & Discipleship Ministries International

WHY SUNDAY SCHOOL?

For nearly 250 years, the Sunday School has been an effective tool for education and evangelism in the local church. In recent years, God has opened up additional doors through which many people join our church family. Around the world, the local church utilizes a wide variety of effective educational and evangelistic tools that do not fit neatly into the classic understandings of Sunday School. Today, Christian education in the local church has expanded beyond merely dispensing information to a room of passive listeners one hour a week on Sundays. Sunday School is moving beyond "one size fits all" classes to an aggressive 24/7 preparation of children, youth, and adults to follow Jesus as His personal disciples. An expanded Sunday School emphasis with discipleship ministries seeks to equip all of us to pursue a Christlike way of life in the fulfillment of the Great Commission and Great Commandment.

THE NAZARENE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday School has always been a part of the Church of the Nazarene. From the denominational beginnings at Pilot Point, Texas, the founding fathers were firmly committed to promoting evangelism, missions, and Christian education.

This young, fledgling religious movement took seriously Christ's command to "go...make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). Because of the evangelistic fervor and revival spirit of those days, the Sunday School became the primary tool through which new believers were taught the tenets of faith.

Sunday School still holds a vital role in the Church of the Nazarene. The major purpose of the Sunday School is to help men, women, boys, and girls study God's Word, the Bible, and apply its life-guiding principles.

"Sunday School and other small groups are vital components in the mission of every Church of the Nazarene. What is done in Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries addresses every aspect of our Core Values. There is no better place where people of all ages learn what it means to be "Christian, Holiness, and Missional" and how "to make Christlike disciples."

The effectiveness of the local church is enhanced when those attending our worship services are given opportunity to learn the Word, participate in small groups that provide nurture and accountability, and find spheres of pastoral concern and personal attention. There is no better venue than Sunday School and other small groups for this kind of ministry.

As well as being proven vehicles for training, discipleship, and fellowship, Sunday School and small groups are also effective evangelistic outreach tools of the church. The Great Commission is most effectively pursued through vibrant Sunday Schools and other small group ministries.

- Board of General Superintendents

Other purposes of Sunday School include:

1. To provide a safe setting in which people can share their joys and sorrows, their concerns, and their questions about life and the answers they discover.
2. To help people discover how to grow as Christians by leading them to examine God's Word and apply it to their lives.
3. To provide an opportunity for people to enjoy small-group fellowship with others who share their concerns and values.
4. To work together to reach people for Jesus Christ.

REACHING PEOPLE...

Sunday School is the setting in which a deeper level of community and learning can be achieved through the personal interchange of thoughts, ideas, and feelings.

From the Garden of Eden, where God personally tutored Adam and Eve; to Abraham and the Israelites, who were instructed to teach God's truths in the home; to the present-day Sunday School, the learning process has always been most effective in small-group settings. This effective small-group organization still offers support, care, and fellowship to individuals. As one faithful attendee points out, "In Sunday School, the people know me by name."

Sunday School is the personal, ministering arm of the church. It extends that arm to assist the pastor and other church leaders. Committed, caring teachers become undershepherds who reach, teach, care for, and nurture each believer. The Sunday School is one of the most effective means of reaching and assimilating new people into the church.

Sunday School is the very heart of congregational life in the Church of the Nazarene. Its coordinated ministries of Bible study, outreach, evangelism, and Christian nurture permeate and give expression to Great Commission activity for every person and age group. It is organized in such a way that the special needs of all age groups in the local church can be met: (1) Children birth to age 12 (completion of sixth grade), (2) youth ages 12 and older, college/university students, and young adults, and (3) adult, married or 24 years and older. No one should feel outside the scope of ministry available through Sunday School & Discipleship Ministries International. Always remember, Sunday School is the foundational ministry for every age group. A church should provide this ministry even if it can provide no others.

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