

3.5 How can we prepare & organize a Bible lesson?

You have perhaps been learning many new ways to teach. If you want to use these methods in your teaching, you must plan both the Bible lesson and the entire Sunday school program very carefully before you begin. No matter what teaching methods you may choose to use, good planning and preparation is essential.

The strength of a teacher's lesson will rarely exceed his organization and preparation. If the teacher only read the lesson through quickly without paying much attention, his teaching will undoubtedly reflect that. If, however, the teacher has worked hard to understand the lesson thoroughly, and if he has organized it well and written out a good teaching plan, his teaching will improve as a result. Studying for a lesson and making a lesson plan is like building a strong foundation under a house. If it is lacking, there is little hope of the lesson being as compelling as it might have been. To build a strong house, you first need to build a strong foundation. To teach a strong lesson, you first need thorough study and good organization of your ideas.

We should always be seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit. From time to time, even after the teacher has completed his lesson plans, the Spirit will tell him at the last minute or even in the course of teaching, to leave the lesson plan and do something that God will show him then and there. We should of course always be sensitive to listen to what God is telling us, and we must always do what He is leading us to do. God can change our lesson plans! However, what is to stop the Holy Spirit from leading us at the time we are making out our lesson plans? He can surely lead us then just as well as later, if we ask His help as we prepare our lessons. So then, my personal view is that the experience of having God change our plans should probably be a rare one, although we never discount the possibility. It can be overplayed, however, and become a spiritual sounding but sinful excuse for laziness in preparation. So the teacher should pray earnestly, prepare thoroughly, and always obey God's voice.

Here is a checklist of things to be considered as you prepare the Bible lesson: (They can be done in different orders.)

1. BEGIN The teacher should begin lesson preparation in plenty of time. It takes time to study and learn the lesson thoroughly. You do not want to feel pressed in your preparations! If you wait until Saturday or later to begin preparing the lesson, you are giving Satan an open door by which he can easily stop you. He can see to it that all kinds of problems and interruptions come up at the last minute to take your time and energy so you will not be prepared to teach and will become discouraged easily. Also, it takes time to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to clearly discern His voice. A very good time for teachers to begin preparation is on Monday, or even on Sunday afternoon following the day's lesson and worship. You should have several days for preparation. This will enable you to teach much more effectively and to enjoy it more, since you will not feel as pressured to complete your preparations within a short time.

2. PRAY It's a good idea to begin lesson preparation with prayer, and continue praying throughout the week. You should be praying for your understanding and development of the lesson, for your own heart, and for your students. You need God's help on the lesson. You need His understanding. Ask for it. Your students also need the Holy Spirit's working in their hearts. Pray that you will be enabled to present the lesson clearly and effectively. Pray that God will draw the students so that they will respond to the Gospel message.



3. READ THE LESSON PASSAGE FROM THE BIBLE Early in your lesson preparation, read the entire lesson in one sitting from the Bible. If you have a lesson guide, it should tell you the Bible passage on which the lesson is based. Do not read the explanation of the teacher’s manual until after you have first read the Bible passage itself.

4. READ THE BIBLE PASSAGE SEVERAL TIMES You should read the Bible passage slowly and carefully, over and over several times in order to learn it thoroughly. Many teachers have said that in order to learn a passage well enough to teach it, they have to read it at least 6 or 7 times. If you begin early in the week, you could read it once every day. While you are reading, think about these questions:

- **WHO?** Who are the characters in this lesson? (Think about people living, dead and future, God, Satan, angels, demonic spirits.) What else of importance do you know about this person? Look up the names in a Bible Dictionary if one is available, or a concordance. Who are the most important characters? The less important? What do their names mean?
- **WHERE?** What places are mentioned in the lesson? Try to find these places on a map if one is available. (This is not so important for children younger than Fourth Grade, although it could enrich your own understanding.) What else do you know about this place? Look it up in a Bible Dictionary or concordance. Follow the movement of the characters in the lesson from place to place. What do the different place names mean?
- **WHEN?** When did the events of the Bible passage take place? Look for words in the passage that have to do with time—words like “then,” “afterwards,” “first,” “early in the day,” etc. If you have a reference Bible notice the estimated date of the passage. Where does it stand in relation to other Bible events and events of world history?
- **WHAT HAPPENED?** What happened in the story? List the events in the order in which they happened.
- **SO WHAT?** What important teaching or principle can we learn from this story? What does it mean to us personally? Think carefully verse by verse. Think about application to your own life, your own family and church, and the students of your class. How can and should this lesson affect your lives? How can you obey or put into practice the principles of this lesson? For example do you see in this lesson---
 - a commandment to obey?
 - a sin to forsake or stay away from?
 - a good example to follow?
 - a bad example to make sure you never follow?
 - a promise to believe?
 - a teaching about God or doctrine?
 - an example showing what God is like?

5. READ THE PASSAGE IN A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE If you understand more than one language and have access to the Bible in those languages, it is an excellent idea to read the lesson Scripture in those other languages. In some cases languages like French or English are richer in theological terminology than some tribal languages or trade languages. Reading the lesson in another language can help you understand it better. If the Scripture is available in your mother tongue but you

regularly read in another language, by all means read the Scripture at least once in your mother tongue. Be sure to read it and be very familiar with it also in the language you will use when you teach. Don't do all your preparation in one language and then try to teach in another!

6. READ THE LESSON IN THE TEACHER'S MANUAL If you have a teacher's manual, you may read the lesson explanation and teaching suggestions. Keep in mind that this is merely the thoughts of someone who has studied the lesson. It is similar to a commentary. It is not equal to God's Word by any means, but it may present some thoughts that can be useful to you.

7. LESSON AIM You need to decide on a lesson aim before you choose the verse to memorize, songs, introduction, application, and learning activities. First make a list of possible lesson aims—teachings that are evident in the lesson Scripture. Then, choose from that list the one teaching that you feel may help your class the most. Be sure to seek God's guidance in this choice. If you have a teacher's guide, consider the lesson aim given in the book. You can choose to use it, or you can change it and use another, adapting the rest of the lesson to the lesson aim you have chosen.

8. INTRODUCTION Choose an introduction that will get your students' attention. The introduction should tie in closely with the teaching that will follow it. Write out the introduction word for word the way you will present it to the children. Prepare any objects that will be needed for the introduction.

9. LESSON PLAN Prepare a lesson plan. Divide the lesson by actions or by ideas into three to five logical segments. Remember the four activities you will do with each segment—Read, Question, Act Out, and Sing. For each segment, prepare questions to ask, ideas for acting out the story, and phrases to sing, along with appropriate melodies. Mark the main segments in your Bible with pencil.

10. MEMORY VERSE Choose a memory verse for the children to learn. It should be a verse or a part of a verse that goes along with the lesson aim. After you have chosen it, make sure you understand it thoroughly. Then learn it, saying it over and over until you know it perfectly and can recite it easily.

11. SONGS Choose several songs that fit in with the lesson aim, and other songs that will mark different parts of your program—prayer time, offering, etc. Make sure you know the songs well, or enlist the help of others who do. Prepare any visuals that may be needed.

12. LIFE APPLICATION Choose an assignment you can give the Christian students as a life application. What is one specific activity they can do during the week following the lesson to begin to put into practice the teaching of this lesson? The life application must go along with the lesson aim.

13. INVITATION Decide exactly how you will offer help to those who do not yet know Jesus. Remember that if the lesson was primarily aimed at Christians, you should give a little teaching about the way of salvation. If you did not mention salvation at all during the lesson, the invitation needs to be just a wee bit longer. If the lesson was about salvation or mentioned it, the invitation should be very short. Write out the invitation just as you plan to present it to the children.

14. PLANNING THE PROGRAM Plan the entire Sunday school program and write it out in the order in which you will do it. Write it in outline form, keeping your list as short and simple as possible. Enlist other helpers if they will be needed.

15. PREPARE NEEDED OBJECTS Put everything that will be needed in order, the first thing you will use on top, the second thing you will use under that, and so on.

16. ADAPT THE LESSON TO THE LEVEL OF THE CLASS Consider the age, experience, and educational and spiritual level of the students in your class. Adapt the lesson to their level. For younger children, cut unnecessary verses out of the passage to shorten it, shorten the memory verse, and simplify the language. Choose an introduction and illustrations appropriate to the level of the students. Chapter 24 gives further suggestions on how to do this.

17. PRACTICE You can gain confidence by practicing the lesson. You can teach your own children or a small group of relatives’ or neighbors’ children. You can also practice saying the memory verse to your spouse or a friend to make sure you know it well.

18. SIMPLIFY Look again at your lesson plan and your program plan. It needs to include everything you need to remember, yet you do not want it to be long or complicated. Your written plan should be very easy to follow, capable of being read at a glance. Write it on paper that will fit neatly into your Bible, and keep it there.

19. PRAY You began your lesson preparation with worship, and you have been praying all week. After you have completed your preparations, put it into God’s hands and don’t worry about it! God will take care of it.

LET’S REVIEW

If you will be teaching next Sunday, when is a good time to begin lesson preparation? Why?

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First the teacher should read the whole lesson from what book? Why?

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About how many times should the teacher read the lesson Scripture in his preparation?

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What are some questions the teacher could ask while reading the lesson Scripture?

- 1..... 2.....
- 3..... 4.....
- 5.....

What are some things the teacher could be looking for as he reads the lesson Scripture?

- Is there ato obey?
- a to forsake or stay away from?
- a goodto follow?
- a bad example to make sure you?
- a to believe?
- a teaching about or doctrine?
- an example showing?

Other than the Bible, name two other books that could help with lesson preparation.

.....and
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The lesson plan should list everything you need to remember, yet not be
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Where could a teacher practice?
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LET'S PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Begin now to prepare a lesson you will really be teaching. Throughout the coming week, work to prepare the lesson and the Sunday school program as you have learned in this chapter. If you do not have a lesson to teach or cannot think of one, use Luke 4:5-8 as a lesson to prepare. Learn it thoroughly and prepare a lesson plan. Write out your lesson plan on another paper.