

Guiding Principles of Sunday School

The Bible Study Ministry of First Baptist Church, Tallassee

The Purpose of Sunday School is to
Reach People, Teach Them the Bible, and Minister to them.

Purpose: The purpose of Sunday School is to reach people and teach them the Bible and minister to their needs. Its primary clients are those who need its ministry; a class does not exist for itself. We want to expose people to the Word of God and to the people of God so that, over time, the Spirit of God does a work of God to bring them into the family of God. Once they are in the family, we want to help them grow.

Changed Lives Principle: The highest goal of Bible Study is to produce change in the lives of people... from lost to saved, from stagnant to growing in Christ, from uninvolved to involved, from depressed to encouraged, from apathetic to excited, from broken relationships to healthy ones. One cannot grow in Christ and stay the same; change is mandatory.

Text Book Principle: Our text book is the Bible. We don't teach the quarterly or teach lessons... we teach the Bible. We ask each class to actually open their Bibles and study the Word. The curriculum is a tool to prepare. Bible teaching time is to be protected during the Sunday School hour.

Enrollment Principle: Adding someone to the class roster shall be considered the point at which ministry to an individual begins. Class rolls are considered ministry lists and prayer lists. Classes will be neither recognized nor reprimanded for the percentage of their enrollment in attendance, as this discourages enrollment. People may be added to the class roster on their first visit – or anywhere, at any time (even off the church campus), as long they agree to be added. You simply ask, "May we add you to our class roster today or are you still "looking us over"?"

New Unit Principle: New units grow faster than existing units. Therefore starting new units will be a priority for the church. Classes should count it an honor to send members out to help start a new unit.

Size Principle: Class size will be allowed to grow as long as space is available, prospects are sought, fellowships are frequent, guests feel welcomed, and ministry needs are met. When growth stagnates, it is time to create a new unit.

Prospect Principle: It is impossible for a church to grow without valid prospects who are assigned to the appropriate Sunday School unit.

Contact Principle: There are three kinds of contacts – Prospect contacts reach out to those not enrolled in a Sunday School anywhere, seeking to involve them in Bible study. Absentee contacts seek to re-involve those who are enrolled in a class but who have been absent. Contacts must be made regularly. In order to make contacts, we must first have the person's contact information (phone number, address and/or e-mail); A name is not enough. Ministry contacts are the caring acts that a class does to show love to a class member who is sick or going through a difficult time. All three kinds of contacts are vital.

Age-Grading Principle: We will maintain a structure that groups people with others with whom they have the most in common. We believe in strict age-grading for preschoolers, children, and youth. Of course, when guests attend we will show flexibility in order to allay children's fears. We encourage age-grading for adults (though we may also use other means of grouping).

Enlistment Principle: Bible Study leaders and directors will be enlisted by the person to whom he or she is accountable.

Shepherd Principle: For the stability, consistency in ministry, and ongoing growth of a teaching unit, one accountable shepherd is needed to know, lead, and teach each class. While multiple teachers for the same class may be convenient, it does not foster a sense of organization and Godly leadership. It is important to have an identified leader for each class just as each team has a quarterback or point guard.

Team Principle: To fulfill its mission, each teaching unit needs a team: a teacher, an outreach leader, a fellowship leader, and, for every seven people enrolled, one care group leader. Teams communicate, plan and work together. Additionally, for young, median, and senior adult divisions there will be a growth agent, to personally encourage and enlist people to discipleship and service opportunities.

Worker Development Principle: Growing Sunday Schools are constantly praying for, seeking, enlisting, and training new workers. Current leaders will assist in the discovery, development, and recruitment of new leaders. Sending out workers is a defining mark of a great class.

Training Principle: Our most anointed service is on the cutting edges of our new growth. Thus, leaders are encouraged to take part in at least one training event each year.

Growing Leaders Lead Growing Christians Principle: Sunday School teachers are expected to attend worship services, to have a good devotional life, and to grow in the Lord. For a leader to lead in growth, he or she must first be growing himself. This is true for leaders in all age groups, including preschool and children's classes; they need growing leaders and good examples, also.

Space Principle: In order to grow, a Sunday School must have more available space than it is presently using. Therefore, classroom space will be assigned so as to give preference to the handicapped, senior adults, preschoolers, growing classes, and new units.

Flexibility Principle: Since classroom space will be used for the overall good of the church, no room shall be viewed as "owned" by a particular class. Classroom space is subject to reassignment as needed. The same principle applies to which hour a class meets. Classes should demonstrate a flexible attitude for the good of the church and its mission.

No Tenure Principle: As our church principles state, "Long service does not give on tenure in an office." Terms of office are for one year. Sometimes, a worker needs a break or to spend some time being fed.

Authority Principle: Each class is part of the Sunday School as a whole, is under the authority of the church, and is led by the ministerial staff and the Teaching Ministry Leadership Team (TMLT). No class can become "the tail that wags the dog." Worker selection and enlistment has been assigned by the church to the Teaching Ministry Leadership Team; classes do not enlist their own teachers. For any group to receive resources from the church for study (at any time, in any setting), they have to work together with the TMLT.

"Not many should become teachers, my brothers,
knowing that we will receive a stricter judgment."

– James 3:1