

The Case for Sunday School

by Dr. Marsha Boyd-Mitchell

Unsplash - Rick Flynn



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“Faith is just believing what God says He will do; He will never fail us; His promises are true.”¹

This was a line from a little chorus we used to sing in Sunday school, growing up. Faith is something there isn't much debate about in Evangelical circles. For many Christians, a Bible memory verse from childhood carries truth into our adult lives: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8, NIV).

The question is, though, how to we “build” faith? What does it mean in 2023 to be a young person “raised in the church”? The approach can be debated at times. In the spirit of “out with the old and in with the new,” some of the former practises of building faith have gone by the wayside; other times they have been reworked with new names, etc. Christian education committees in churches are often grappling with ways to impact the next generation in things of faith and biblical influence.

To learn is to “gain or acquire knowledge of or skill in (something) by study, experience, or being taught.”² The educator in me insists that if a person is to learn something,

they need to be taught or exposed in some way to the content. In the “old days,” Sunday school curriculum had a comprehensive “scope and sequence” that insured certain topics were covered in certain years. Much discipleship happens while the Scriptures are taught, pondered, and examined for meaning. How will our children and youth know the story of God? If the Bible is our guidebook for our Christian faith, what strategies will we use to engage this generation of church history to its dense truths? A book inspired by God himself, with 66 books, over 40 authors, written from three continents, in three different languages and spanning over 1500 years from start to finish: the mature Christian knows there is a lifetime worth of study in its pages.

Our youth need the comprehensive scope and sequence of biblical knowledge: the creation of mankind; the fall of man; the flood; the kings and kingdoms God used to perpetuate his purposes; the genealogy of God's chosen people; the messages of the prophets; the expressions of faith and praise in the poetic books; the fulfilment of God's plan in the New Testament with the birth of the Messiah; the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus; the early Church; the letters to the churches; the missionary journeys of

Paul; and, the splendor of an eternal heaven found in Revelation.

Personally, I learned all the above with the use of flannelgraphs and flashcards and Sunday school workbooks. I have done my fair share of teaching with these methods as well. This is not even mentioning rightly dividing and discerning the specific doctrines of the Church that pre-middle schoolers can begin to discover about for themselves: salvation, baptism, communion, the Trinity, sanctification, justification, the recognition of the biblical canon, and so on.

There are many ways to build a scaffolding of biblical truth. The method or name may not look or sound like the Sunday school of old, but the content should still be intact. Today, we might use YouTube videos, or the YouVersion of the Bible to engage ourselves electronically.

There are many apps that are full of biblical truths and direction. We might use resources that engage our kids and youth in the ways *they* are accustomed and rename the programming in a way that brings enthusiasm for God's Word. All this

change shows the Church's great capacity to make ancient truths relevant to today. If you are a gifted educator, why not use your gifts to teach the next generation? If you are a parent or grandparent, take the responsibility of faith-training seriously, and keep your eye open for materials that will help. Dig out those old flannelgraphs: who knows, the youth in your life might think they are a new discovery!

1. Lyrics by W. B. Liggett.

2. Definition of learn from:

<https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/>



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