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7 Deadly Sins of College Sunday School



Providing a quality Sunday School experience for college students can be one of the most challenging ventures in the life of a church. It can also be one of the experiences that helps lead your church to revival and to a new level of discipleship and commitment to Christ. As you work and pray to create a Sunday School time that engages students and helps them learn to be passionate about God and His Word, there are some missteps that you can make that will limit the effectiveness of your time to

1. **LECTURE** – Today’s generation of students is an interactive one. They have grown up in a time of open discussion and they truly value opportunities to discover what they believe through discussion. The preferred style of learning for the vast majority of today’s students is discussion. They want a time where they can ask questions and learn from not only the “teacher”?? but also each other. Using lecture as your primary teaching method kills that spirit. Lecture does not interest them and they find it dull! Even if the Biblical lessons that you are teaching are important, students will check out if the material is presented in lecture format. Consider adding discussion and small group interaction to your teaching time. Often, college Sunday School leaders are intimidated by the types of questions that students are asking. They tend to ask ultimate questions. By ultimate, I mean questions dealing with BIG issues such as the problems of evil and a loving God; predestination versus free will; knowing and living God’s will and more. These are certainly not easy questions. Theologians and Christians have struggled for centuries to find answers for some of the questions that they will ask. Do not be afraid to allow them the opportunity to ask these questions. Allowing them to ask questions allows you as the leader to:

- Understand where they are in their lives with Christ
- Have an opportunity to follow up with them about their questions at another time
- See a place where you and the student can grow in your knowledge of God
- Help the students feel important
- Develop future Bible studies that address their heartfelt needs

2. **INCONSISTENCY** – Regardless of what students tell you, they are creatures of habit. They love reliability and stability. In conversation with students you will be convinced that this is not true, but it is. They love fun, spontaneity, and new ideas, but they also crave

some stability and consistency in their lives. Students of today live at a breakneck pace. Between classes, work, volunteer hours, internships, a culture that tells them that more is always better, and an advertising industry that pushes them to consume more and more, they are a pushed generation. Providing a consistent time for them on Sunday morning, whether they consistently take advantage of it or not, is reassuring to many students. They will come because they know that you are there for them.

3. PASSIONLESS TEACHING – Students crave models of the Christian life that are truly living a life for Christ. They are looking for a cause and for people that are working and living for the cause of Christ. They will not be a part of a Sunday School time that only goes through the motions. Honestly, do you enjoy meetings where people are just there because they are supposed to be? Neither do I. Inject some passion into your teaching. If that means that you stray away from the quarterly Sunday School curriculum from time to time....IT IS OKAY. Let students know what you care about, what you struggle with, the lessons that God is teaching you. They will identify with you and will learn that the Christian life has challenges and struggles and that Christ will help us with those dark and hard times in our lives.

4. THE ONE (WO)MAN SHOW – Sometimes as leaders, we fool ourselves into believing that we are the only ones that can lead the Sunday School time. We tell ourselves lies such as: no one will help me, students are terrible teachers, I know more of the Bible than the students. Encourage students to lead out through teaching Sunday School. It may intimidate them. It may frighten them. It may also bless them. God has given many people (including college students) within the church the gift of teaching. Help them discover that gift and let it be affirmed. Even if the time does not go very well, the student will discover that their gifts do not lie in teaching and they can begin to look elsewhere for their place of service. Of course, you will want to coach students as they prepare. Be careful to not equate a lack of experience with a lack of talent or gifting. In the end, STUDENTS LISTEN TO STUDENTS.

5. KEEPING SUNDAY SCHOOL ON SUNDAY MORNING ONLY – As Christians, we have a long tradition of Sunday School. For us Sunday School has been a time on Sunday morning just before church and it will stay that way. Originally, the purpose of Sunday School was to provide a safe way to reach out to non-Christians and to be a gateway for them into the church. Unfortunately, in some situations, Sunday School has become a sacred cow. You

know what a sacred cow is: something that used to help us, but now only stands in our way and impedes progress. Don't read what I am not writing here. In many places, traditional Sunday School is still a great tool that is working well. In others (perhaps in your situation) it is a sacred cow. It's not working. It should be killed and made into burgers, but it is too holy to do away with. If the purpose of Sunday School is to provide a safe place where students can bring non-Christian friends and introduce them to God's Word and Christians, and that purpose cannot be fulfilled in your area on Sunday morning in a church building, then move your college Sunday School. Move it to a restaurant, move it to Sunday night, move it to a home, or move it to your campus.

6. **BEING BORING** – Ask yourself this question, "Was Jesus boring"??? No really, do you believe that Jesus was boring! Hardly! In fact, Jesus was never boring. He challenged, he took on the Pharisees, he asked tough questions, and showed amazing compassion. The Christian life was never intended to be boring especially when we are learning about Christ. Take some time to plan new and creative ways to teach about Jesus during your Sunday School hour. Use experiential learning. Take students places during Sunday School, setup a phone conversation with a missionary during your time, and look for interesting ways to communicate the lesson. Look for ways to use humor to teach. Jesus used humor.

7. **NOT HAVING A CAUSE** – Students want to do something for God. They don't just want to learn about God. They want to experience God and work on His behalf for His kingdom. They want to help people find Christ. Share Christ's cause with them and give them specific ways that they can be involved. Yes, they are limited in time and money, but they are not limited in heart and they will surprise you with their capacity to do, give, and go in Jesus' name and for His sake.

Leading collegiate Sunday School IS challenging. It takes time, effort, and perseverance, but you can be assured that your investment is not in vain. 1 Corinthians 15:58 states, "So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and steady, always enthusiastic about the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless." (NLT)

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