

15 Minutes to Great Sunday School Lessons

adapted from "The 15-Minute Guarantee" by Ellen Cole Landreth

So you've agreed to teach a preschool Sunday school class. What were you thinking? You love the age level and God has gifted you with the ability to teach. You want to do your best for Him, but you've just looked at this week's calendar—work responsibilities, after-school activities, small-group Bible study. You are beginning to waver and wonder about the commitment you made.

Take heart! Relief is just 15 minutes away. It's called "The 15-Minute Guarantee." This guarantee suggests that teachers spend 15 minutes each day in lesson preparation. Here's how it works.

Begin on Sunday

Day one of lesson preparation begins Sunday afternoon. Spend 15 minutes thanking God for today's worship time and reading the Scripture for next Sunday's lesson. While reading, pray for wisdom and insight. Getting the Scripture in mind early in the week gives the Holy Spirit seven full days for expansion. You might be surprised at the corresponding events God brings into your life during the week.

On Monday, read the Bible background given in your teacher book or look for other study helps. Read the Bible Memory verse and post it where you will see it throughout the week. Consider the life focus or application point too. What will the children know, feel, or do when they leave your class next Sunday? Make yourself a simple lesson plan sheet. When teachers write these things down, it doubles the benefit of their preparation time. Once it's written down, your mind isn't obligated to remember it. And the next time you return to your planning, it's there to remind you.

Tuesday, spend 15 minutes in prayer for your students, preparation, and presentation. Ask God for insight into your students' needs. How will next Sunday's lesson benefit their lives? How will it enrich your life? Having problems with a student? God knows all about it. Pray for wisdom.

Wednesday, focus on the planning and preparation of learning activities. Look at the activity options and choose which activities will be best for involving the children. Remember to consider the various learning styles of children in your class. List on your lesson plan sheet the activities you will be doing and any items you'll need to collect. Writing this information down can free your mind for focusing on the other activities of your busy day. Don't forget that you can enlist others too. If you have activity pages to prepare or pieces to cut out for crafts, check with some of the older members in your congregation. They are often more than willing to help and can prepare an entire quarter of material at a time.

Keep on Going

Thursday is the day to plan how you will present the Bible story. Using visuals or objects your students can see *and* touch will more than triple their retention. Prepare any visuals that are provided in the curriculum, or gather teaching objects you want to use. Remember that the best visual is one you should use every week—the Bible! Fold an 8" x 11" sheet of paper in half. Jot down the main points of the Bible story, and then place the paper in your Bible. When possible, place visuals in your Bible too and pull them out at the appropriate times. (Or have the children find them in the Bible!) Teaching the lesson from an open Bible shows the children how important God's Word is to you—and to them!

Friday's 15 minutes can be spent on planning application and review activities. Look at all Jesus said in the Gospels. More than 50% is application; less than 50% is doctrinal teaching. Jesus knew how the Word is best transmitted to life—through review and application. How will you review the Bible lesson and help children apply it to their lives? You are the vehicle through which God will work to help the children in your class grow in Jesus—and it takes more than a quick prayer as the closing bell rings, asking the Holy Spirit to apply it to their lives.

On Saturday, review the lesson plan and gather supplies. Check the list of needed items that you prepared throughout the week. Collect those items. Pack everything into a Sunday school tote bag, and get a good night's rest. No more Saturday night cramming!

It's Sunday Again!

Sunday morning has arrived. Be ready and in your classroom 15 minutes before the class is scheduled to begin. This step cinches the guarantee, plus provides a bonus. Consider those 15 minutes. Multiply 15 minutes by 52 Sundays per year. You've just gained 13 hours, which equals an entire quarter of class time! Instead of four quarters per year, you now have five. Isn't that worth being 15 minutes early?

Consider the flip side of the 15-minute bonus too. By arriving each Sunday just at the designated start time, some teachers think they are on time. But by the time they round up straying class members and get themselves organized, at least 15 minutes are lost. In a year's time, those teachers have lost 13 hours of class time. An entire quarter has been lost, and the teachers end up with only three quarters of time for influencing young lives for God.

The 15-minute principle is guaranteed because it is successful. No more need to waver or wonder. You've made the right choice! Grab your Bible and your Sunday school teacher book. Glance at a clock and let God guide your 15 minutes today.