

connectingpoints



As you begin your preparation, consider some of the following ideas for incorporating this Sunday School emphasis into the life of your church and Sunday School classes. This “library of ideas” is organized by general categories. Mix-and-match these ideas as appropriate for your local setting. As many of these ideas are “general” in scope and setting, you will obviously want/need to adapt certain ideas to fit your needs and/or the current Sunday School emphasis.

PREPARATION & PROMOTION

- ✓ Identify some individuals to pray specifically for the effectiveness of your Sunday School emphasis.
- ✓ Have each Sunday School class review their responsibility list; determine a plan for contacting absentees; think creatively about ways to recruit new class members.
- ✓ Encourage classes (in all age groups) to creatively integrate the goals of this emphasis into the life of their class.
- ✓ Make copies of the “*People I Want to Connect With*” card template (downloadable at www.nazarenesundayschool.org) and distribute these through your Sunday School classes. (Half of the card is designed to record names of people to invite to church and/or Sunday School; the other half can be filled in and returned when someone has attended or requested more information.)
- ✓ Schedule a combined adult Sunday School class to explain the upcoming emphasis; provide morning refreshments.
- ✓ If they’ve not already done this, have classes initiate an ongoing system of contact with their class members: notes, birthday/anniversary cards; prayer support; phone calls and visits.
- ✓ Distribute copies of the “*How to Invite Someone to Sunday School*” guide (downloadable at www.nazarenesundayschool.org), perhaps as a bulletin insert or during a combined Sunday School rally.
- ✓ Conduct a “telephone blitz” to contact every person on your church responsibility list, inviting them to Sunday School.
- ✓ Sponsor church advertisements or announcements on a local radio station (remember—it doesn’t have to be a *Christian* radio station!) to promote this emphasis and any special events on your upcoming calendar.

- ✓ This is a great time to launch a new Sunday School class, or even a new six-week elective.
- ✓ Devote some attention to the physical environment of your Sunday School classes. Learning happens most easily in settings that are **clean** (do your classrooms need a fresh coat of paint?), **comfortable** (are the chairs and/or tables in adequate condition?), and **conducive** to learning (what about lighting? temperature? are the necessary supplies and/or technology readily-accessible?).
- ✓ Make sure your greeters are familiar with your Sunday School class structure and locations. Perhaps a small “cheat-sheet” outlining the various Sunday School offerings, along with age ranges and locations, would be helpful for anyone who may come into contact with visitors or new attendees.
- ✓ Distribute a small gift to everyone in your Sunday School this week, as a way to kick-off this emphasis. (Great promotional items are available from Sunday School Ministries! Visit the SSM website at www.nazarenesundayschool.org for product overviews and ordering instructions.)

OUTREACH & EVANGELISM

- ✓ Practice “random acts of kindness” as a church body. Encourage Sunday School classes to brainstorm possibilities.
- ✓ Debut a new small group or support group for special groups in your church, such as single parents; those dealing with death or divorce recovery; persons involved in substance abuse recovery; etc.
- ✓ Visit local nursing homes or convalescent centers and spend time with the residents. Prepare special music and/or activities.
- ✓ Allow the youth of your church to lead the way by organizing community service projects that will help establish your church’s presence in your community. Encourage Sunday School classes or families to participate as a group. Possibilities include:
 - *helping clean up some public areas*
 - *offering free lawn mowing, window cleaning, landscaping, or home repair assistance to elderly or single-parent residents of your neighborhood*
 - *hosting a free car wash in the church parking lot*
 - *assisting at a local homeless shelter*
- ✓ Take this opportunity to launch a new “compassionate ministry” outreach program at your church.
- ✓ Make copies of the “*People I Want to Connect With*” card template (downloadable at www.nazarenesundayschool.org) and distribute these through your Sunday School classes. (Half of the card is designed to record names of people to invite to church and/or Sunday School; the other half can be filled in and returned when someone has attended or requested more information.)

- ✓ Distribute copies of the “*How to Invite Someone to Sunday School*” guide (downloadable at www.nazarenesundayschool.org), perhaps as a bulletin insert or during a combined Sunday School rally.
- ✓ Challenge each Sunday School class to sponsor a showing of the *JESUS* film/video. Creative and careful consideration should be given to what traditional or new methods of doing this might be the most effective for exposing people to this powerful representation of the Good News. The location(s) and time(s) you choose will determine your promotion and follow-up.
- ✓ Enlist Sunday School classes to participate in your church’s visitation of new attendees or prospects. Encourage your classes to initiate their own visitation program.
- ✓ Sponsor a one-day “off-premise” Sunday School with various classes meeting in a variety of off-campus locations. The objective is to let your community see and know you. Don’t let your Sunday School remain a secret!
- ✓ Organize a “Care Projects Committee” with intergenerational representation to identify special care projects that the Sunday School can adopt.

AGE-SPECIFIC (Children/Youth/Adult)

- ✓ Schedule a children’s parade during morning worship. Have your kids present a special song that they’ve been practicing.
- ✓ Your children’s department can host an “open house” and “ministry fair.” Invite families to attend together. Provide refreshments and information.
- ✓ Host a children’s party or lock-in (possibly on the Saturday prior). Set up all kinds of activities and games in your church parking lot and/or fellowship hall—sports activities, skill games, crafts, face-painting, etc. Encourage your kids to invite their friends. Be sure to register all in attendance—especially new children—for future follow-up.
- ✓ Have a combined children’s Sunday School class, with special music and a guest speaker.
- ✓ Involve your children’s Sunday School classes in your congregational worship through special music, drama, or Bible memorization.
- ✓ Highlight your children’s Bible quizzing program. You may even want to incorporate a live demonstration of your quizzers’ talents!
- ✓ Organize a “Bible Verse Balloon Launch” where each child selects a card printed with a special Bible verse and your church information. Have your kids write their names on their cards, along with an invitation to attend your Sunday School and church. Be sure to include your church’s website and e-mail address so that balloon “recipients” can respond! Incorporate your entire church (all ages!) into this event, perhaps on the first Sunday as a kick-off to the emphasis. Encourage your congregation to pray, reminding them that God’s Word promises that it will not return without results.

- ✓ Incorporate youth into your congregational worship through special Scripture readings and/or dramatic presentations.
- ✓ Promote the annual “See You at the Pole” observance through your youth Sunday School classes. Encourage students to share about their experiences with your congregation.
- ✓ Utilize your teen Bible quizzers by allowing them to demonstrate their biblical knowledge gained through this exciting program!
- ✓ Have your youth lead the way by organizing your church’s presence in a community-wide activity (parade, seasonal festival, etc.). Perhaps your church could sponsor a booth, float, exhibit, etc. and distribute church literature, evangelistic information, free scripture portions, *JESUS* videos, or the like.
- ✓ Organize a Bible “read-a-thon” to highlight the importance of Bible reading. For example, your youth could read aloud the entire New Testament in a 24-hour period. A “sponsorship” component could be added, with the proceeds being directed toward the purchasing of Bibles or other Christian literature for a needy church in your community or in another world area.
- ✓ Consider identifying a greeter (or, in the case of large classes, a small team of greeters) whose responsibility it is to welcome new attendees to the class, introduce them to fellow attendees, and help them feel at ease in this new setting.
- ✓ Contact a knowledgeable community leader who could help you identify a service project that would meet a specific need. If possible, structure it so that all age-groups can be involved. Schedule it for a Saturday prior to one of the special emphasis Sundays. Celebrate what God enables you to do by inviting those people representing the community and those affected by your service to Sunday School and worship. Publicly share with them your appreciation for the opportunity to serve and the reason why you did what you did.
- ✓ Invite adults (and other ages as well!) to share special “life verses” or specific Scriptural passages that have had profound impact on their spiritual development and formation throughout the years. Perhaps the collected verses could be displayed on a church bulletin board or in a “take-home” resource that is distributed during this special emphasis.
- ✓ Introduce a “Bible Reading Plan” through your Sunday School classes. Distribute these reading guides and integrate an accountability (or incentive) component into the ongoing follow-up.
- ✓ Intentionally involve the senior adults of your congregation in a special way through personal testimony/interview, special music, or other presentation. These perspectives can be powerful reminders of God’s faithfulness to His followers.

FAMILY

- ✓ Have families sit together for morning worship. Recognize families with multiple generations present. Present a gift to the family with the most members present. Schedule family photo opportunities,

- ✓ If possible, involve families in your worship service (reading Scripture as a family unit, prayer, greeters/ushers, special music).
- ✓ Have families adopt those without family in the area or with no biological families. Remember: “single parent families” are family units, too.
- ✓ Offer a “New Family Welcome” hour to neighborhood families. Have Sunday School classes create “care packages” to distribute to these new families.
- ✓ Encourage “Family to Family” outreach! Have families invite other families (neighbors, coworkers, etc.) to Sunday School for one of these special emphases.
- ✓ Consider organizing a special “Family Sunday School” class to encourage intergenerational learning. Or, encourage parents to attend Sunday School with their children from time to time to demonstrate their commitment to the child and his/her teacher(s).
- ✓ Host a special Communion service for families (include non-typical “family groupings” made up of those for whom the people of God are their only family). Schedule times for the celebration of this sacrament, instructing children, parents, and family members about the meaning and significance of this event.
- ✓ Use this opportunity to provide families with guidelines for developing “family altar” times or for generating family discussions about spiritual issues. Possibilities include:
 - *family devotional guides*
 - *spiritual discussion starters*
 - *service opportunities for families*
 - *sample “family traditions” that can be instituted*

TEACHER APPRECIATION

- ✓ Sunday School Ministries offers several items that would be appropriate as teacher appreciation/recognition gifts. Visit www.nazarenesundayschool.org for additional information and ordering instructions.
- ✓ Recognize teachers and Sunday School workers in your morning worship service. Invite teachers of all age groups to stand; present them with a special certificate or gift. Have a special prayer time for these committed individuals.
- ✓ Have several individuals (perhaps a child, a teen, and an adult) share with the congregation why they appreciate their Sunday School teacher. Recognize these specific teachers, along with all Sunday School teachers and workers.
- ✓ Identify a specific month as “We Love Our Teachers” Month. Encourage classes to express their appreciation through gifts, cards, meals, or acts of service.
- ✓ Host a “Teacher Appreciation Banquet” and honor those who contribute to the Christian education efforts in your local church. Recognize teachers of all age groups with a special gift. Don’t forget your nursery workers!

- ✓ Distribute blank note cards to your congregation and encourage members to write a quick note of appreciation to their teacher. Collect these cards and present them to your teachers during a special recognition time.
- ✓ Identify an individual or two as “Teachers of the Year.” Present them with a *Second Mile Award* as special recognition of their outstanding commitment and dedication to their ministry. *Second Mile Awards* can be ordered from Sunday School Ministries; download an order form at www.nazarenesundayschool.org.
- ✓ Encourage parents to help their kids write a special note of appreciation for their Sunday School teachers; hand-deliver the notes, perhaps along with a small gift or freshly-baked cookies!

GENERAL

- ✓ Honor classes that have demonstrated growth during this emphasis. Sponsor “breakfast goodies” for those classes who have brought in new members.
- ✓ The final Sunday of your Sunday School emphasis offers an excellent time to welcome new attendees into your local church membership. What about planning a “baptism service” to help celebrate the new-found peace that Jesus offers? Find a way to celebrate spiritual victories!
- ✓ Consider a one-day “Getting to Know You” Sunday. Have every church attendee (including the pastoral staff, Sunday School teachers and workers, ushers and greeters, and children/youth) wear a namebadge with his/her name on it.
- ✓ Implement an on-going “teacher training” time for all Sunday School workers. Take advantage of any district-sponsored or general church training events; sponsor your teachers and workers in their participation in these activities.
- ✓ Host a “Meet the Pastors” luncheon following the morning worship service. Honor new people, new converts, new class members with a special gift or recognition. (Check out the sample items offered by Sunday School Ministries at www.nazarenesundayschool.org.) Allow time for these new people to fellowship with the pastoral staff and families and other key church leaders. Provide information on how they can become involved in the ministry and fellowship opportunities available at your church.
- ✓ Sunday School Ministries sponsors two denominational-wide offerings each year: the World Literature Offering on Pentecost Sunday, and the American Bible Society Offering in December. Churches are encouraged to support these offerings through their Sunday School classes, perhaps via special fund-raising drives or even as simple as designating the regular Sunday School offerings on a specific Sunday(s) toward these important causes. (Additional information will be mailed to every local church in advance of these special events.)
- ✓ Weather-permitting, consider holding a class outside to provide some variety to your Sunday School class setting.
- ✓ Encourage Sunday School classes to plan class parties or socials.