

The church is a community of people sharing a common purpose and fellowship. We are continually growing in faith and in the knowledge of Jesus, the Son of God.

The Sabbath School class is one of the most important functions for a healthy church. In the class setting, there is an interchange of ideas that is non-threatening, a sharing of faith and Biblical instruction. Friendships are made and a sense of community is built up. Questions are asked and answered in an informal setting.

For most of the Sabbath service, the visitor or member listens - but the main opportunity for sharing comes in the Sabbath School class. A Sabbath School class teacher, has a responsibility to share personal experience as well as knowledge. "Those who teach in the Sabbath School must have their hearts warmed and invigorated by the truth of God, being not hearers only, but also doers of the Word. They should be nourished in Christ as the branches are nourished in the vine." (Ellen G White, Counsels on Sabbath School Work, page 94.) You can't share with others what you have not experienced yourself.

The value of Questions

Questions are a primary teaching tool. Some reasons for using the question technique:

1. Questions attract attention.
2. Questions break the ice and get discussion under way.
3. Questions tell you how much knowledge the class member has.
4. Questions allow the class members to share the spotlight.
5. Questions are helpful in reviewing the lesson.
6. Good questions help the class to struggle with problems.

An important part of the question technique is listening carefully to the answers. Teachers need to listen even while planning the next strategy.

A teacher can restate a comment so all the class can hear it. This is a part of the listening process -getting the full impact of what was stated.

You will want to discourage tangential discussions which have little to do with the topic. Taking this path of least resistance is often an indication of an unprepared teacher. Instead seek to draw the discussion back to the essentials.

Key discussion questions may include: "What difference does this topic make in how you live your life?" "How would you explain this to a friend who does not believe in God?"

(Teaching Techniques for the Adult Sabbath School by Charles H Betz)



THE MINISTRY OF THE

Adult Sabbath School Teacher

Have you been asked to serve your local church as a teacher and wonder what an adult Sabbath School teacher is expected to do. This guide has been designed to help you understand this valuable role within your local church.

The Role of the Sabbath School Teacher

A “teacher” or leader of an adult Sabbath School class has a primary responsibility to help people learn while developing strong relationships.

The teacher is responsible for:

- preparing for the following weeks class to establish key points and thoughts
- arriving early to set up for class and starting on time
- arranging a substitute teacher if you are unable to attend and advising the Sabbath School superintendent
- helping class participants feel welcome. This may include an open question such as “What has your week been like?” or “Where are you from?”
- allowing for a sharing time prior to the lesson where support and encouragement are provided
- inviting the Holy Spirit through prayer to guide the study and to care for the needs that may have been discussed
- involving class members in prayer to help to “bare one another’s burdens”.
- guiding class members through reading the Bible and applying it to everyday life.
- encouraging members of the class to take initiative to nurture and care for each other
- connecting with other teachers to discuss the lesson and strengthen skills

Teaching the Lesson Tips

Your main concern as a teacher is to involve the class members in the discussion. You can accomplish this in several different ways.

Ask open-ended questions that call for an opinion rather than a “yes” or “no” answer.

Use clarifying questions such as, “What do you mean? ... What did you have in mind?” or “Would you elaborate on that?” You don’t have to be the final authority on every issue.

Watch the expressions on the faces of your class members. You may see someone that has an idea they would be reluctant to share without some encouragement from you.

Ask questions that relate ideas in the lesson to one of the member’s *personal experience or expertise*.

Use illustrations. They are like windows; they let in light. Some of the best illustrations come from personal experiences.

Accept all comments, especially commending those who may be bashful or reticent to speak.

Tactfully prevent any individual from monopolizing the discussion.

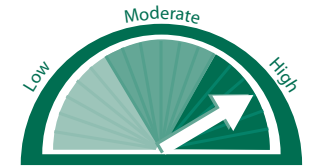
Occasionally, conflicts will arise in the class, particularly from opinionated individuals. Try to remain impartial and not infer that any member is wrong in his or her opinion. Arguments should be avoided. Never put a person down.

In preparing the lesson plan, think carefully about the topic, the length of the class time, the background and learning style of the class

members, your teaching abilities and the size of the class. Generally, the length of the class is *30 to 45 minutes* although, in more and more churches, some classes meet for a full hour.

Time Commitment

The time involved in lesson preparation and leading an adult Sabbath School class depends on the background and training of the teacher. Usually three to five hours in preparation.



Responsible to

Cooperate with the Sabbath School Superintendent

Skills and Spiritual Gifts

God has gifted each of us in different ways. The following gifts are valuable when considering the choice of members for the role of Sabbath School teacher.

- **Teaching:** It is the capacity to communicate the love of Jesus in a practical, meaningful way.
- **Pastor/shepherd:** To be able to carry a personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers, overseeing, protecting and guiding. (This gift is not limited to church pastors)

