



Your Sunday School and 21st Century Kids

by Sharon Ellard

If we want to disciple children in Sunday School, we need to understand what it's like to be a child today.

Busy Kids

Children between the ages of 4 and 12 are busy. According to a report in American Demographics, kids' weekly schedules changed significantly between 1981 and 1997.

- ❖ TV viewing went down by nearly two hours.
- ❖ School time increased by over eight hours.
- ❖ Sports activities took two hours more.
- ❖ Chores increased by over three hours.
- ❖ Playtime decreased by almost four hours.
- ❖ Church attendance decreased by almost one hour.

What does this mean for your Sunday School?

Prayerfully consider how to make Sunday School a refuge from the rush-rush pattern of a 24/7 lifestyle. Rather than packing every lesson with as much information as possible, prayerfully focus on one or two main principles of each Bible passage. With this kind of refined focus,

children will have more time to examine each point in depth. Older children can talk through true-to-life scenarios that connect the biblical principle of the lesson with their everyday routines. Also take time at the beginning of each lesson to ask how students applied the principle from the previous week during their daily routines.



Millennial Kids

This new generation of children goes under several names: Millennials, Bridgers, Generation Y, and sometimes Generation Next. Not surprisingly, Millennials are media savvy. They are aware of "adult" issues like AIDS and terrorism. They believe they can help improve the world, and they want to start as children. Many Millennials enjoy working on teams with grown-ups. Given the

chance, they will act. President Bush invited American children to send \$1 each to help those who had lost parents during the terrorist attacks of September 11. Within a couple months, Millennials had sent over 1.5 million dollars.

What does this mean for your Sunday School?

Watch for projects the children can join to help others. Emphasize that often the answer to big problems depends on how each person responds. As we control our own responses, we collectively make a big difference. Sunday School lessons prepare us to be part of the answer. Watch for Bible verses that children can memorize and use as reminders of how God wants us to live. Agree to pray for one another during the week about problems that have been discussed. Consider creating a class directory of e-mail addresses and phone numbers that will help children keep in touch with one another between Sundays.

Exposed Kids

The religions of the world are coming to America. More and more often children are going to

school with Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist classmates. More often it is “politically correct” for teachers to introduce world religions as a part of the school curriculum. More television series are including episodes that highlight beliefs that contradict the Bible lessons we teach in Sunday School.

What does this mean for your Sunday School?

Jesus is the distinctive of Christianity. Help children fall in

love with Jesus. The more they love Jesus, the better they will live for Him and tell others about Him. Share with children stories of how Jesus is changing your life or the lives of others you know. Also watch for times to connect a Sunday School lesson with missions stories. Help the children to enjoy the foods, clothing, and languages of other nations while also praying that all nations will come to know Jesus. On a globe, show where Jesus gave the Great

Commission to go into the uttermost parts of the world. Then point to the U.S.—we are one of the “uttermost” countries. Missions-giving sends the good news about Jesus back throughout the world out of gratitude.

God’s Word is for every generation. Understanding this generation of children will help you teach the Bible in ways they can integrate into their everyday lives.

Questions for Further Study—

1. What are some benefits to having only one or two main principles to your lesson, rather than cramming in everything the lesson suggests?
2. What are some projects your church has going on or in the making which you can involve your students in?
3. What are some ways you can introduce your students to other world religions, and at the same time show them how to share their faith with others?

This article is reprinted from the Fall/Winter 2003 issue of *Fanning the Flame*, a quarterly newsletter for children’s workers produced by the National Children’s Ministries Agency. *Fanning the Flame* is mailed free to children’s pastors and directors in the local church. For additional copies and back issues contact GPH at 1-800-641-4310.

