



September 2021

Fox River Life



The proceeding article is written by Bobby Jamieson (an Associate Pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.) and Jonathan Pennington (an Associate Professor of New Testament Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY). As we return to Sunday School this month I thought it would be helpful to have some justification for Sunday School and why you should make sure to attend.

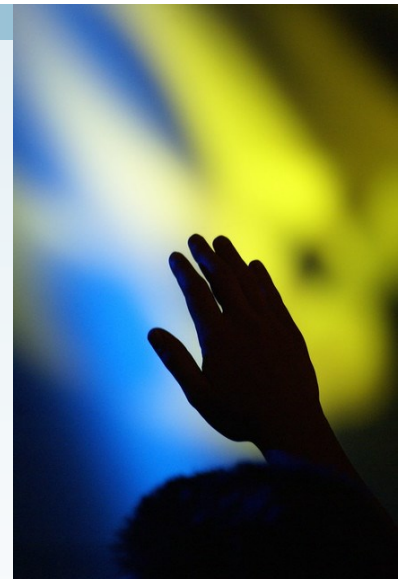
*In His Name & For His Glory,
Pastor Tim*

I'm not entirely sure why, but it seems that everywhere I look, churches are abandoning adult Sunday School. There may be some valid reasons for this, but I would suggest that such churches are in danger of throwing away a key tool for training church members to be wiser and more faithful disciples of Jesus. So, in this article I'm going to present an apologetic for Sunday school. I'll begin with a couple reflections on personal experience.

EXPERIENCES WITH AND WITHOUT SUNDAY SCHOOL

In addition to either participating in or teaching Sunday School for about twenty years, I've had two especially noteworthy experiences with it. The first was at the Evangelical Free Church in Sycamore, Illinois, which I attended immediately after I became a Christian during college. In those days, an older man who was a second-career seminary student taught a theology class in Sunday school that was similar in scope and content to Grudem's *Systematic Theology*. As a brand new Christian, I had fireworks of truth going off in my mind and heart every single week. My early growth in Christ was profoundly shaped and helped by that faithful, weekly doctrinal teaching. Further, the church had a thriving "after-church Sunday school" for college students. Students would congregate for lunch every Sunday and discuss a theological book or video series (such as RC Sproul's *Holiness of God*) in an older couple's home. Twenty-plus years later, I still remember the books we read during those times and their impact on me.

The second experience with Sunday school worth mentioning is actually about a lack of Sunday school. During my graduate studies in Scotland, I noticed that many churches didn't have Sunday school, and there seemed to be a correlation between the lack of adult Sunday School and the generally lower biblical literacy among the congregation. I'm sure that there are other factors involved, and that there are many churches in the United Kingdom that are exemplary in both biblical literacy and adult education. But the experience stuck with me, and it cast the value of Sunday school in a new light.



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Deny Yourself

*"Then he said to them all:
"Whoever wants to be my
disciple must deny
themselves and take up
their cross daily and follow
me. 24) For whoever wants
to save their life will lose it,
but whoever loses their life
for me will save it. 25) What
good is it for someone to
gain the whole world, and
yet lose or forfeit their
very self?"*

Luke 9:23-25

From the Pastor's Desk (cont.)

AN APOLOGETIC FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL

There are three planks in my argument for Sunday School: first, the foundational role of knowledge in discipleship; second, the division of labor between preaching and teaching; third, the unique teaching potential of Sunday School compared with other contexts.

1. *The Foundational Role of Knowledge in Discipleship*

First, knowledge is foundational to discipleship. The gospel is a message. The Triune God has revealed himself to us in a book. And he calls us to love him with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37). All Christians are called to grow in the knowledge of God as a means of growth in godliness. In Hebrews 5:12 the author rebukes his readers, saying, "For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God's word. You need milk, not solid food." He expected these believers to be consistently growing in knowledge. Or again in 1 Corinthians 14:20 Paul writes, "Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature." Paul here shows us that it is the responsibility of every Christian to grow in their thinking about God.

Therefore, those who lead the church should have a burden to equip every single member of their flock with a well-rounded, scripturally derived, steadily increasing knowledge of God and his ways. We pastors should want every single person in our churches to grow in their knowledge of Scripture, to develop a biblical worldview, and to be increasingly able to apply the gospel to every area of their lives.

2. *The Division of Labor between Preaching and Teaching*

Second, in the church there is, and should be, a division of labor between preaching and teaching. Preaching is central to the life of the church, but it is not the only ministry of the Word that a church should regularly receive.

Preaching aims to exult in God and the gospel and to transform those who hear it. It is proclamation, celebration, and exhortation. Preaching is grounded in teaching and contains much teaching, but its aim is more focused: preaching aims to slice right through the heart of the listener and bring about repentance, comfort, joy, obedience, and worship, all in the moment of hearing. In addition, preaching is a monologue addressed to the entire congregation. This will usually include believers and non-believers. And the Christians present will represent a wide range of seasons of life, callings, and degrees of spiritual maturity.

On the other hand, teaching, specifically in a Sunday school context, has a different end and a slightly different means toward that end. While not neglecting the heart, teaching gives special focus to the mind. And while teaching will involve monologue, it should also feature dialogue. In fact, that's one of the great strengths of a classroom setting. Further, Sunday school classes are to some degree self-selecting. If you teach a class on parenting, parents and would-be parents will be the bulk of your attendees. Those who are interested will come, and those who aren't, won't. This allows you to devote more attention to a subject and to delve into greater depth than if you were addressing the whole congregation.

The less formal and more intellectually focused atmosphere, the possibility for dialogue, and the self-selecting nature of the classes all adds up to a great opportunity for addressing subjects more comprehensively than the pulpit is suited to. For example, consider a practical and pastorally sensitive subject such as parenting. If a pastor is preaching through Scripture, parenting will come up occasionally in places like Proverbs and Ephesians 6. And pastors should regularly apply other texts to issues in parenting to help parents see how the word of God bears on that important calling.

Yet the pulpit's ability to address parenting issues is limited. It would be inappropriate and distracting to delve into conflicting philosophies over discipline or schooling. Further, preaching's monological mode limits the congregation's ability to ask questions, push back, and clarify matters. These are important steps in the learning process, especially when dealing with gray areas, second-order issues, and practical matters on which Christians can legitimately disagree. Thus, in many ways a Sunday school class on parenting can accomplish more than a sermon series. And again, a Sunday school class would generally be a more appropriate way to address the topic at length, since it will only be directly relevant to a portion of the congregation. There are also more intellectually demanding topics that are foundational to discipleship which are better addressed from the lectern than the pulpit. Consider, for example, the subject of how to study the Bible.

Now, a scripturally faithful sermon does model how to read the Bible. A church member who sits under a steady diet of faithful preaching will learn much about how to read Scripture in a contextually sensitive and spiritually transformative way. Yet listening to a sermon in order to learn how to read the Bible is like playing a round of golf with a master: you're experiencing the final product. So you absorb some of their habits and instincts, but only what you can pick up by imitation.

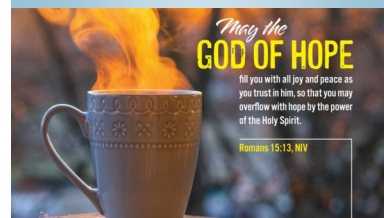


*"The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him."
Psalm 28:7*

The Women's Ministry Committee put together and delivered summer greeting cards to bless the residents and staff at Brewster Village and Carolina Assisted Living on September 1st. It is a blessing to us to be able to serve in this way.

On August 3rd, Jan Jourdin hosted 4 women at her home for the Single Women's Get-Together. They shared a meal together and thoroughly enjoyed the time spent together. Jan intends to host this event each month. Watch for the date of the next gathering.

Our next Ladies' Craft and Lunch will be held on Sunday, October 17th after Sunday School. See below for more details.



Full Assurance of Faith

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20) by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, 21) and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22) let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. 23) Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. 24) And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Matthew 7:7-8

Ladies' Craft and Lunch



**October 17th at 12:00pm
in the
Fellowship Hall**

Cost: More information to come*

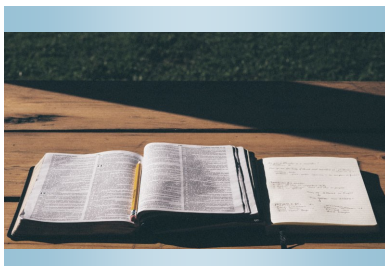
***Lunch is included in the cost**

Sign-up Sheet on the Information Desk



Craft Details: All supplies are included in the cost.

**Please bring a hot glue gun if you have one.*



Be Transformed

"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2) And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."

Romans 12:1-2

From the Pastor's Desk (cont.)

On the other hand, a Sunday school class on how to study the Bible is like a series of lessons with a master golfer. They teach you proper technique, walk you through the game step by step, evaluate your swing, and so on. They make you aware of dozens of factors that go into playing the game well—things they now take for granted, but that you have likely never even thought of. A course on how to study the Bible can address hermeneutics, genre, translation, and many other issues that are generally out of place in a sermon, yet are foundational to reading the Bible well. A sermon models good Bible reading, but a Sunday school class trains people in good Bible reading.

In sum, I would suggest that it is healthy for there to be a division of labor in the church between preaching and teaching. There is surely much overlap between the two, yet they have distinct means and ends. And there are crucial topics on both the practical and intellectual ends of the spectrum that can be addressed much more thoroughly—and with greater overall pastoral impact—in a class than in a sermon.

3. *If Not Sunday School, Where?*

Third, Sunday school is suited to addressing these topics in a way that other contexts, particularly small groups, are not. It seems that today many churches which don't have Sunday school rely on small groups of one kind or another to accomplish some of the same ends. These small groups tend to incorporate fellowship, prayer, missional outreach, and some kind of Bible-based discussion.

Let me say at the outset that small groups like these have many strengths, and I have experienced much blessing through leading one in my home for several years now. But when it comes to making disciples through biblical teaching, small groups have several serious weaknesses. First, the environment inherently prioritizes relationship over instruction. Sitting knee-to-knee on a couch in someone's living room is generally not a context that is conducive to serious intellectual engagement on many topics. Again, this is not a bad thing in itself, and this context can greatly aid in building relationships, one of the single most important aspects of church life. But small groups are not primarily geared toward a teaching context.

Further, small groups are just that—small. Their strength is in the greater intimacy which a group of eight or twelve people can attain compared with a gathering of thirty, seventy-five or even two hundred that might attend an adult Sunday School. If churches are going to rely heavily on small groups for teaching discipleship, there will need to be a lot of them. This means that a church will need a lot of people to lead them. This, in turn, means that you will need to enlist people who are less gifted and experienced teachers. So, if a church intended to use small groups to address serious, theologically challenging issues such as divorce (or any other theologically and pastorally difficult topic), they would be hard pressed to find enough teachers who could handle such tricky territory and handle it well.

On the other hand, a Sunday school class can be almost any size and still retain most of its usefulness. This means that fewer teachers are needed, and, therefore, the more gifted and qualified teachers are able to use their gifts to build up the church, which is as it should be. Thus, I would suggest that this "size vs. number of teachers" dynamic is another strength of Sunday school over against small groups as a vehicle for teaching-based discipleship. Sunday school allows the most gifted teachers in the church to exercise a vital, life-giving ministry. It multiplies the elders' and other gifted teachers' ability to minister the word to the congregation for their edification, all the while addressing topics that are *not* best handled in the monological pulpit.

The number of teachers who can dig deep into the Word and equip the church regarding challenging biblical and theological issues will always be smaller than the number of those who are sufficiently relationally mature to lead a small group. So, Sunday school allows a more precious resource of the church to be invested more widely and strategically. It allows a smaller number of gifted teachers to influence a larger portion of the body week in and week out. This creates a bigger, stronger engine for the church's discipleship.

The bottom line here is, if not Sunday School, then where? If you don't have Sunday school, where are you going to teach people how to study the Bible? Where are you going to give them a thorough grounding in systematic theology? Where are you going to discuss the ins and outs of parenting, or dating and marriage, or evangelism? I'm afraid that when churches abandon Sunday school, some of these things are simply no longer being taught to the congregation as a whole. And churches are thereby missing a significant opportunity to equip their people with biblical building blocks for faithful discipleship.

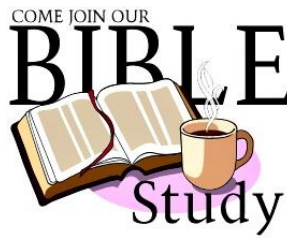
CONSIDER WHAT YOU MIGHT BE MISSING OUT ON

For all these reasons, I would argue that Sunday school is a valuable tool for conforming our churches to the image of Christ. It feeds our people the knowledge they need to grow in godly living. It complements and supplements the regular pulpit ministry. And it is able to do what other contexts such as small groups can't, namely, foster rigorous intellectual engagement about a wide range of matters that are crucial to discipleship. My goal is not to scold churches that don't do Sunday school. I'd rather offer an invitation to consider what you might be missing out on. Consider how you might be better able to equip your church for works of service if you devoted weekly time, in addition to the sermon, to laying intellectual and practical foundations that will equip your whole church to grow as disciples of Jesus.

Intentional Discipleship Update

Well the summer break and my sabbatical will soon be coming to an end. It has been a good time of refreshment, but the R&R has a purpose to refuel us for future ministries. In that same vein we will be starting back up our Men & Women's Saturday Bible Studies on Daniel and Hebrews respectively. If you would like to begin the study do not worry in both we are just getting started and you can easily get caught up to speed. If you would like to know where we will be starting in each one on September 11th please reach out to Scott Smith for the Men's study and Becky Godfrey for the Ladies. The Women's Thursday Bible Study will resume on September 9th beginning "The Practice of Godliness" by Jerry Bridges. This study is a sequel to "The Pursuit of Holiness" that was studied during the last session. Sign up for a book at the Welcome Center if you'd like to join. Contact Linda Hoffman if you have any questions.

On the following day, Sunday September 12th, we will be starting back up again our Sunday School for all ages. The youth and Adults will continue to look at the life of Christ and will focus on His Authority as revealed in His teachings and miracles. The books for this study are available at the Welcome Center in the foyer and the cost for these books is \$5. Do not let cost be a reason for not participating, if you are unable to pay please pick up a book as we have set aside funds to help pay for the books.



As I am writing this article, my thoughts are on my girls starting school again this week and I am sad to see summer end. The thought of fall sports, homework, and reading lists for Honors English classes are also in the front of my mind. I am thankful that our children have the opportunities they do, but I'm also concerned about the environment in which these opportunities exist. I'm very thankful that I can "cast my cares on Him" knowing that He cares for my children even more than Jay and I do. That's an amazing truth that gives me great comfort!

Angela and I have been busy going through all the materials in the library and weeding out the old, and making room for the new. The discard table remain in the foyer until we are finished with this process. Please take what you will use or share with someone else. Anything left over will be donated. Once again...Thank you for your patience during this time of transition.

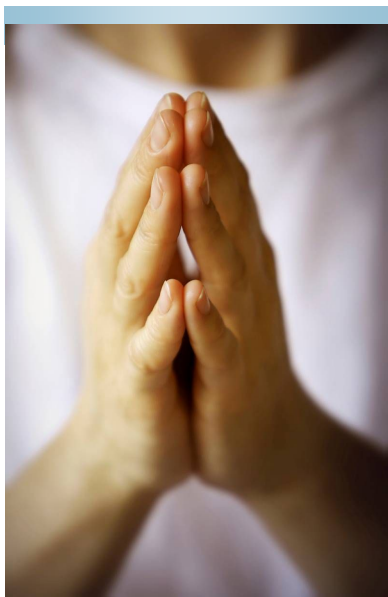
- Linda and Angela



Be in the Word

"For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13) Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account. 14) Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. 15) For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.

Hebrews 4:12-15



Sunday Evening Services Schedule

September 5—No Evening Service

September 12—Prayer at 5 pm

September 19—Sola Christos

September 26—Prayer at 5 pm

SUNDAY



Men's & Women's
Bible Study
Saturdays at 8am

Women's Bible Study
Thursdays at 1:15pm

Women's Prayer
Wednesdays at 9:30am

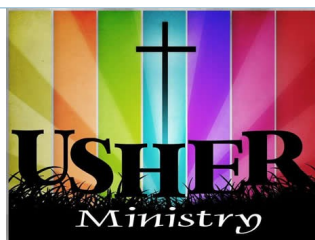


Financial Update—August 1-29, 2021

Budget needed weekly: \$ 2,606.00

Received: \$

Contact Rob Mlodzik with questions.



September 5

Jay Hoffman

September 12

Ryan Smith

September 19

Jeffrey Smith

September 26

Kyle Tubbs

St Joseph's Food Pantry

Each month we will collect
non-perishable food items.

Place your food items on the table
provided in the foyer.



Connect
WITH OUR
CHURCH FAMILY

Here at FRBC, we have a prayer chain meant for the sharing of prayer request needs and for sharing praise for the awesome & mighty work God does in our lives. Please feel free to share any praise or request at our new prayer request email address:

prayer@foxriverbaptist.com

Care to be part of the prayer chain? Email or call Becky Godfrey at
becl.godfrey@gmail.com — (920)277-1526

Missions

“Go Ye into all the World, and preach
the Gospel to every creature.”
Mark 16:15

Missions Update

Over the past 2-3 years the Missions Board has taken a long look at the missionaries and organizations that we support, with the purpose of determining how we want to move forward with Missions. We sent out a questionnaire last fall to our missionaries and asked them some probing questions about their ministries. From those responses, much prayer and deliberation it was determined that we needed to remove at least two of the missionaries that we support. After all was said and done we have discontinued supporting over the last year six missionaries or Mission Organizations. Those include: Brother Marlan Ingco-Philippines; Lake Ellen (that ministry closed its doors); Children's Shelter of Cebu (removed from the Missions budget and put back under the responsibility of the Adult Sunday School Class); Tim & Treena Johnson-Dominican Republic; The Surrect Family-Brazil; and finally YMI. Please continue to be in prayer for the Missions Board as we are working on criteria for adding new Missionaries, although we have no intention of doing so at this time. We believe that our current Missionaries enable us to minister to them well and to build relationships. As we continue in this process we will from time to time report to the church about what we are doing.

God's Will

“Rejoice always,

17) pray without ceasing,

*18) give thanks in all
circumstances; for this is the
will of God in Christ Jesus
for you.*

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18



FRBC Vision Statement

We desire that everyone who enters Fox River Baptist Church grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and grow in authentic, loving, familial relationships to make the name of Christ known in our community and world, all for the glory of God and joy of all.



- 1—Rob Mlodzik
- 1—Rhonda Dohms
- 9—Laura Bressler
- 15—Lily Hoffman



- 2—Ron & Anne Van Asten
- 25—Dan & Judy Waggoner



Fox River Baptist Church

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Thursday - 9:00 am - 1:00 pm