

# Goodbye, Classroom Chaos!



# TRAINING MANUAL

A Step-by-Step Guide



# Goodbye, Classroom Chaos!

## Proactive Strategies for Your Children's Ministry

### Focus

To provide Sunday school teachers and children's ministry volunteers with practical strategies for keeping kids on track and out of trouble by setting boundaries and showing love.

### Time

60-70 minutes

### Audience

Sunday school teachers and children's ministry volunteers

### Room Setup

Round tables with chairs are ideal for this workshop. Rows of chairs that can be quickly rearranged to form small groups will also work well. Create an inviting atmosphere by setting out tablecloths, flowers, and refreshments. Be careful where you place the PowerPoint projector so that the screen that is visible to every participant.



# 1

# INTRODUCTION

## Goal

To introduce the topic of classroom management in a lighthearted way.

## Time

10 minutes

## Supplies

- Workshop Outline (Handout 1), one per person
- Skit: The Perfect Sunday School Class (Handout 2), five copies
- Newsprint
- Markers

When most people have settled into your workshop, pass out Handout 1. Take the time to introduce yourself and let the teachers know the purpose of this workshop: to provide practical tips and strategies to prepare leaders to better manage their Sunday school classes and small groups. The ultimate goal of leaders and other volunteers is to teach the Word of God to children, and this cannot happen without good classroom management!

### The Perfect Sunday School Class (8 minutes)


Ask for five volunteers who don't mind speaking in front of a crowd of people (this shouldn't be too difficult in a room full of teachers!). Distribute copies of the skit (Handout 2) to each volunteer and give them a few moments to congregate together, quietly read the skit, and assign roles. (If possible, direct them to a place in the room where they will not be heard by the rest of the group.) While they are quietly rehearsing, ask the group what some of their biggest management challenges are and write them down on a sheet of newsprint.

When your volunteers are ready to present the skit, say, **Let's watch a scenario of a Sunday school class. Think about what you would do if you were the leader in this situation.**

Let the group perform the skit and give them a round of applause. Then ask the group these questions:

- What were some of the mistakes this leader made?
- Did anything in this skit remind you of your own small group?
- What would you have done differently if you were the leader in the skit?

Tell the group that you hope they will leave this workshop with a few more resources and ideas to make their church group an even better environment for children to learn about God.

 **tip** **If your teaching team is large, have everyone discuss these questions around their tables or in groups of three or four people.**

# 2 THE "WHY'S" OF DISCIPLINE

## Goal

To highlight the value of discipline within children's ministry.

## Time

15 Minutes

## Supplies

- PowerPoint slides 2-9
- Bibles

### Why Discipline? (5 minutes)

Say, At church, we may be tempted to avoid discipline, even when kids are misbehaving. We may think, *What's the use? They're only going to continue to misbehave!* or, *I can handle this for an hour.* But discipline is not a matter we should ignore or take lightly. Why should we discipline? Because God disciplines us. A few synonyms of the word discipline are correction, development, and preparation. In our Christian walk, God corrects, develops, and prepares us to be better followers of him. If God values discipline, then we should too!

Ask a volunteer to read Hebrews 12:4-11 (TNIV):

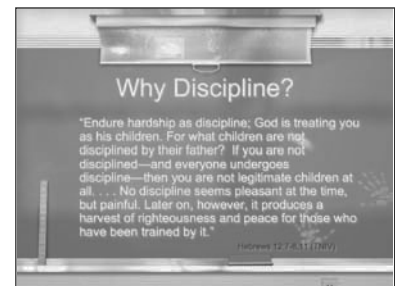
In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as children? It says, "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his child."

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate children at all. Moreover, we have all had parents who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! Our parents disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

Continue by saying, According to this passage, there are a few reasons God disciplines us:

- He loves us and wants the best for us. Spiritual discipline and correction help us live happy, fulfilled lives.
- We are God's children. Just as parents discipline and correct their children, God corrects us. If he didn't, we wouldn't be his children!
- Discipline produces righteous living. Though the road to righteousness may not always be pleasant, the outcome of a disciplined life is righteousness and peace.

Say, We should keep these reasons in mind as we discipline the children in our Sunday school groups. Ask God to help you love them the way he loves us, and remember that correction seasoned with tender care will reap a harvest of righteousness in due time.



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## Why Do Children Misbehave? (10 minutes)

Say, Now that we know why we should discipline, we also need to understand why children misbehave. Some children can't seem to sit still; others are always making other kids laugh. Some children are sullen and withdrawn; others are angry and defiant. How in the world can we teach children with so many different needs? Children don't usually act out for no reason at all.

Children who misbehave might really be saying

- I need you to notice me and tell me that I'm important!
- I feel sad and alone, and I want you to tell me everything is going to be OK.
- I'm angry and upset, and I need you to listen to me.

Let's take a look at five reasons why children misbehave, and strategies that can help bring more peace and control into your class.

Discipline problems may occur if . . .

- Children feel unloved.

Children may be struggling with insecurities, self-esteem issues, or with problems at home. When children aren't happy, they may seek attention through misbehavior.

*Strategy:* Give them constant affirmation. Praise them when they do something good by complimenting them, giving them a "Star Student" certificate, a warm note letting them know you're thinking of them, and appropriate shoulder squeezes and hugs. They need to know that you really care!

- You are not prepared to teach.

If you are frantically reading your Sunday school lesson 15 minutes before you leave for church, you're probably not ready to teach. You may still have to make photocopies, take out craft supplies and grab skit props! There's nothing like the panicked feeling of not being prepared. As you fumble through your leader's guide during the lesson, kids will take advantage of this time to monkey around.

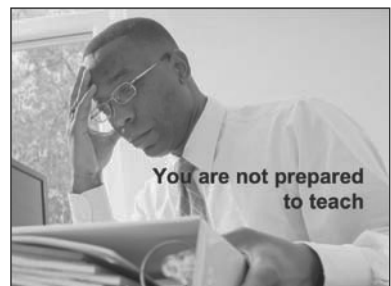
*Strategy:* Study your lesson during the week, or at least the day before you teach. Read it thoroughly, take notes, and gather any supplies that you need for the lesson. Try to arrive early enough to set up your room. As you plan your lesson, keep in mind the different ways kids learn and provide activities that are engaging for everyone. (There's another great Faith Alive workshop that deals entirely with teaching the multiple intelligences called *Help! My Kids Are Having Too Much Fun!* Check it out!)



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- You are too permissive.

Children will misbehave if they sense that you won't do anything about it.

*Strategy:* Establish rules with your kids, discuss positive and negative consequences for following (and breaking) these rules, and *be consistent*. Be sure to follow through with the consequences when they test you (and they will!) Don't let them get away with everything!



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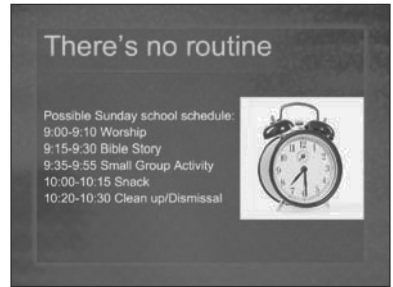
- There's no routine.

Children may get into mischief if there is no consistent routine. They feel safe and secure when they know what to expect. This is especially important for young children or for settings where the leadership rotates throughout the year. Though activities will vary from week to week, your lessons will flow much more smoothly when the overall pattern of the session is familiar to the kids.

*Strategy:* Write a schedule of activities on posterboard and post it where everyone can see. Stick closely to the steps within your curriculum to build consistency. A sample Sunday school schedule could look something like this:

- 9:00-9:10 Worship
- 9:15-9:30 Bible Story
- 9:35-9:55 Small Group Activity
- 10:00-10:15 Snack
- 10:20-10:30 Clean up/dismissal

It's very important that your overall structure stays the same!



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- Kids can't concentrate.

Children's attention span is only about as many minutes as they are old. There are numerous children who are hyperactive, have attention deficit disorders, or are very easily distracted.

*Strategy:* Always keep your lesson moving. Depending on your age group, do a quick activity to help refocus kids' attention. Stop your lesson every now and then and have kids stretch to get their "wiggles" out. If you have a child that just won't sit still, try bringing a soft squishy ball or some other toy for them to hold on to during your lesson.



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- Kids don't attend church regularly.

Children who do not attend church regularly may be lost and confused during your lesson. If they don't know what you're talking about, they may find other things to occupy their attention while you teach.

*Strategy:* Before you delve into the new Bible story for the week, ask a child to review the story from last week, or provide a brief recap of what you discussed for children who may have been absent.



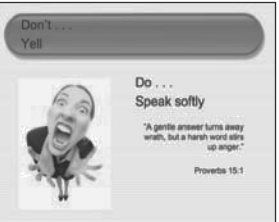
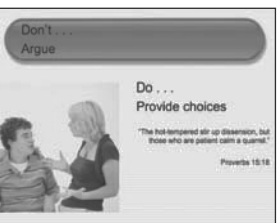

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# 3 STRATEGIES THAT WORK

|  |
|--|
| <b>Goal</b>  |
| To explore proactive solutions for discipline problems   |
| <b>Time</b>  |
| 20 minutes   |
| <b>Supplies</b>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PowerPoint slides 10-16<br><input type="checkbox"/> Scenario (Handout 3), one per person<br><input type="checkbox"/> Star Student Certificate (Handout 4), one per person |

## Discipline Do's and Don'ts (5 minutes)



|    |   |   |
|----|---|---|
| 11 | <p><b>Don't . . .</b><br/>Yell</p>  <p><b>Yell</b><br/>As tempting as it may be to raise your voice at times, this only lets your kids know that you have lost control.</p>  | <p><b>Do . . .</b><br/><b>Speak softly</b><br/>Stay calm, and speak low. Don't let them get the best of you!<br/><i>"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."</i> —Proverbs 15:1</p>   |
| 12 | <p><b>Don't . . .</b><br/>Argue</p>  <p><b>Argue</b><br/>You as the adult have the last word and the final say. Don't give kids a chance to argue about your decision to discipline them.</p>  | <p><b>Provide choices</b><br/>Give them the option to correct their behavior or receive a consequence. If they continue in their negative behavior, calmly provide the consequence.<br/><i>"The hot-tempered stir up dissension, but those who are patient calm a quarrel."</i> —Proverbs 15:18</p> |
| 13 | <p><b>Don't . . .</b><br/>Make empty threats</p>  <p><b>Make empty threats</b><br/>Avoid making unreasonable, empty threats to intimidate your kids, such as, "If I hear another peep, you'll sit here all morning with no snack!"</p> | <p><b>Give reasonable consequences</b><br/>Provide realistic consequences that you and your kids can live with.<br/><i>"All you need to say is simply 'Yes,' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one."</i> —Matthew 5:37</p>  |

## Don't . . .



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### Embarrass a child

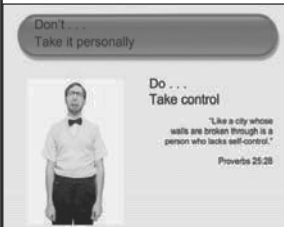
Don't decide to "teach them a lesson" by embarrassing kids in front of class. Excuse yourself and take the child aside to quietly talk

to her.

## Do . . .

### Build children up

Tell them you know they can do better!  
"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." —1 Thessalonians 5:11



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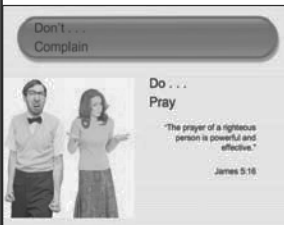
### Take it personally

Realize that you are not your child's sworn enemy. Kids don't really hate you—even if they say they do! Children naturally rebel against

any type of authority figure. Stand your ground, be firm, and they will respect you.

### Take control

Remember to take control of your own actions before taking control of the class.  
"Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control." —Proverbs 25:28



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### Complain

See each time with your students as an opportunity to show them Christ's love. Don't gripe about their mishaps and mistakes. Keep a positive attitude!

### Pray

As you prepare your lessons, pray for each student in your class, or choose one child in particular to pray for during the week.  
"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective." —James 5:16



## Positivity Is the Best Policy (10-12 minutes)

Invite everyone to form teams of three or four, and distribute a copy of the scenario on Handout 3 to each person. Ask one member to read the scenario aloud to their team, and have them discuss the questions on the handout. Give teams 3-5 minutes to come up with negative and positive ways to handle the situation, and then open the discussion to the whole group. Ask one member from each team to share their responses.



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### Scenario:

*Nine-year-old Alicia has five brothers and sisters. She doesn't always get the attention she needs at home. In her small group at church she really wants to be accepted by the children in her Sunday school class. She loves to get kids' attention by making jokes while you are teaching. One particular Sunday morning Alicia starts acting extremely goofy. She won't sit still and keeps jabbering at a hundred miles per minute. When you firmly tell her to sit down and be quiet for the tenth time, she rudely shouts, "I hate you!" and refuses to do anything you ask.*

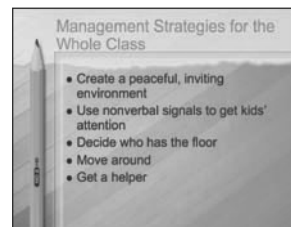
After groups have had time to brainstorm and share solutions, wrap up by sharing something like this:

Alicia's situation may have been remedied before it got out of hand. Children respond much better to positive reinforcement than to negative feedback. Instead of always punishing children for unwanted behavior, try to give positive consequences for good behavior. Here are some ways to boost your kids' confidence and self-worth with positivity:

- Give lots of compliments—a kind word can go a long way!
- Verbal praise—tell your kids what a great job they're doing.
- Give appropriate hugs, shoulder squeezes, and so on—this is a great nonverbal way of showing kids you care.
- Hand out special prizes like pencils, small toys, or candy when they don't expect it.
- Give out "Star Student" certificates (see Handout 4).
- Write "Thinking of You" notes.
- Send a note home to parents praising a child's good behavior.
- Give special privileges (allow kids to choose a praise song, a game or craft, pass out snacks, and so on).

## Management Strategies for the Whole Class (5-8 minutes)

Say, Now that you know how to meet the needs of the children in your group who need the most attention, let's wrap up by talking about managing the entire class. There are several ways to prevent classroom chaos and ensure success.



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- **Create a peaceful, inviting environment**

Hang up fun posters in your room, and display the class rules in a prominent place. Make your room a place kids want to come to! Set up table "centers" or stations with different age-appropriate activities at each table (easy crafts, coloring books, Bible storybooks, and so on). As children come into class they can work at one of the stations until you are ready to begin. If you'd like, play quiet kids music to set a peaceful mood as children quietly work.

- **Use nonverbal signals to get kids' attention**

When you are ready to begin class or get kids' attention from a craft or game, use a noisemaker such as a rain stick or a small bell to quiet them. There's no need to strain your voice by trying to shout over them! As soon as they hear the signal, they should stop working and give you their attention. You could also come up with a clapping rhythm or hand signal.

- **Decide who has the floor**

To make your lessons a little more fun and to encourage respectful listening, choose a small stuffed animal to hold while you teach. When someone would like to give an answer, share a comment, or ask a question related to your lesson, give them the animal to hold as they speak. Stress that only the person holding the stuffed animal is allowed to speak while everyone else listens. When that person is finished, take the stuffed animal back and find another person to share. This will definitely encourage others to participate in the lesson! This also works great when sharing prayer requests.

- **Move around**

While telling the Bible story in your lesson, don't get stuck in one spot in the front of the room—move around! As you walk around, keep an eye on students who may be fidgety or chatty. Gently put a hand on their shoulder or ask them a question about the story to keep them on track.

- **Get a helper**

If possible, recruit a class helper. This person could be a teenager, college student, or an older adult who just wants to help out. Make an announcement in your church bulletin or talk to your Sunday school coordinator. Your aide can help pass out art supplies, snacks, help you lead songs, or sit beside a restless child.

# 4 GROUP SHARE

## Goal

To learn classroom management techniques from one another.

## Time

15 minutes

## Supplies

- Newsprint
- Markers

### What has worked for you? (10 minutes)

Wrap up by encouraging the group to discuss some management techniques that have worked for them. Encourage everyone to form new teams of three or four people, and give each team a sheet of newsprint and markers. Give them about 5 minutes to talk together and write down some strategies that work well in their churches. Call all groups together and have them post their newsprint on the wall and share at least two management strategies that their group came up with.



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### Q&A Time (5 minutes)

If time allows, leave space for questions in the last few minutes of your workshop. Then close your time together in a word of prayer.

# Workshop Outline

## **Step 1: Introduction**

**Notes:**

**The Perfect Sunday School Class**

## **Step 2: The “Why’s” of Discipline**

**Notes:**

**Why Discipline?**

**Why Do Children Misbehave?**

## **Step 3: Strategies That Work**

**Notes:**

**Discipline Do’s and Don’ts**

**Positivity Is the Best Policy**

**Management Strategies for the Whole Class**

## **Step 4: Group Share**

**Notes:**

**What has worked for you?**

**Q&A Time**



## **Skit: The Perfect Sunday School Class**

*[Leader stands in front of the students, who are sitting on the floor or on chairs.]*

**Leader:** *(happy, enthusiastic voice)* Welcome, class; I'm so glad to see all of you! Today we're going to talk about Noah and the ark! Let's all get into a circle.

**Defiant Diana:** *(crossing her arms)* I don't want to get in a circle!

**Bobby the Bully:** That story is dumb—I've heard it a thousand times!

**Active Andy:** *(bouncing with excitement)* Ooooh, let's hear it, let's hear it! I LOVE this story!

**Forlorn Fiona:** *(begins to whimper)* I want my mommy!

**Leader:** *(speaks calmly)* Now, children, please follow my instructions and sit in a circle.

*[Students form a circle; Bobby pulls Diana's hair.]*

**Defiant Diana:** Owwwww! Teacher, Bobby is being mean!

**Leader:** *(raises voice)* Bobby, you stop that this minute!

**Bobby the Bully:** What? I didn't do anything!

**Defiant Diana:** Did too!

**Bobby the Bully:** Did not!

**Defiant Diana:** Did too!

**Bobby the Bully:** Did not!

**Leader:** *(raises voice louder)* Stop arguing!

*[Andy gets up and dashes around the room, acting like a monkey; Bobby and Diana continue to bicker as Fiona whimpers.]*

**Active Andy:** Yippee! I'm a monkey in Noah's ark!

**Leader:** *(raises voice even louder)* Andy, come here and sit down right now!

*[Bobby and Diana start pushing each other.]*

**Defiant Diana:** Bobby, stop pushing!

**Bobby the Bully:** You started it!

**Defiant Diana:** No I didn't!

**Forlorn Fiona:** *(cries)* I want my mommy!

**Leader:** *(yells loudly)* EVERYBODY QUIET!

*[Everyone stops in their tracks and looks at the teacher.]*

**Leader:** Everybody sit still and stop fighting! If I hear another sound or see anyone jumping like a monkey, no one gets a snack! *(talks enthusiastically again)* Now let's talk about Noah. . . .



## **Scenario**

Nine-year-old Alicia has five brothers and sisters. She doesn't always get the attention she needs at home. In her small group at church she really wants to be accepted by the children in her Sunday school class. She loves to get kids' attention by making jokes while you are teaching. One particular Sunday morning Alicia starts acting extremely goofy. She won't sit still and keeps jabbering at a hundred miles per minute. When you firmly tell her to sit down and be quiet for the tenth time, she rudely shouts, "I hate you!" and refuses to do anything you ask.

*Brainstorm positive and negative solutions.*





# Star Certificate

*This is to Certify that*

\_\_\_\_\_ *is a Star Student!*

*Date:* \_\_\_\_\_

*Teacher:* \_\_\_\_\_

