

## Sunday School Classroom Management

Here are a few frequently-asked questions and some helpful answers:

**I. Q.** Our **pre-schoolers** are often asked to sit in a large circle for lesson time and can get restless. How do I keep their attention?

A. The current attention-span guesstimate is one minute per year of age, so aim for that number of minutes to get your point across. Group activities, however, can engage interest longer, IF you shift focus and allow them to release energy. When your kids squirm, lead them in a thirty-second “Wiggle Time” break. Shout out these fun, physical instructions for kids to follow:

- ❑ Stand up and turn around!
- ❑ Reach for the sky and tickle the stars
- ❑ Shake your arms! Shake your legs! Shake everything at once!
- ❑ Turn around!
- ❑ Sit down!

The kids will love this routine. After a few wiggles and giggles they’ll be ready to sit and listen for a few more minutes. In this regard, we hope none of our Sunday Schools have their children in a classroom for more than one hour. Class time should be only a *part* of Sunday morning. Other regularly scheduled time blocks: church attendance; Junior Choir; Assembly.

**II. Q.** My Sunday School class has good attendance and I generally have the same kids week after week. But **sometimes we have a great time together and sometimes I feel I have completely lost control.** What makes the difference?

A. While there may be any number of reasons why this is so, try being proactive about where the children are sitting. Where people sit can make a big difference in how they behave, even as adults.

- ❑ *Have the active kids sit closest to you.* This allows you to place a calming hand on a shoulder or knee without interrupting your lesson or discussion. A gentle touch can silently redirect a student’s attention without embarrassing him or her.
- ❑ *Seat the quietest kids across from you.* Students who receive the most direct eye contact from you are also receiving the most nonverbal permission to talk. This arrangement encourages the less talkative kids to participate.
- ❑ *Place the talkative kids where they won’t receive as much eye contact.* If you’re in a circle these kids should sit in the 3:00 and 9:00 positions. In a traditional classroom, they can sit along the sides. Frequent talkers don’t need extra eye contact to feel entitled to speak.
- ❑ *Tell kids who sit with their friends that they only get one reminder not to talk to each other per Sunday.* Let kids know that it’s great to sit with a friend, but after one reminder, disruptive behavior will require “buddies” to separate.

*Do you have specific questions about your time in the classroom? Write in and we’ll be happy to answer them. To start us off, the above Q and A was adapted from the March/April issue of Children’s Ministry.*