

## Chapter 1

### Planning for Special Days

“SPECIAL DAYS” are important days and should be carefully planned well in advance. The planning for these special days is an integral part of the planning for the total program of the Sabbath School. Such planning should be done by the Sabbath School council when all aspects of the year’s program are being considered. This is important so that all phases of the year’s work will fit together as a coordinated program.

We should ever bear in mind that special days and seasons present unusual opportunities and therefore require our best planning.

It has been said, “To fail to plan is to plan to fail.” This applies to the work of the Sabbath School superintendent and Sabbath School council as well as to professional men in the business world.

The Sabbath School superintendent and the Sabbath School council do not have to plan for five or ten years ahead, but they should plan at least for the entire current year.

Planning should be done at a time and in a place that allow uninterrupted thought. An essential part of the session is to get all of the council involved and thinking together. This will help the morale of the entire Sabbath School. However, this does not mean that all members of the council will take part in working out the details of all phases of the program.

It is well to begin the new year’s planning with an evaluation of the previous year. This can be done by divisions. Evaluation is a process of judging objectively, as far as possible, the weak points and strong points of past efforts. Features that proved to be unsuccessful or unwise should be corrected. Ideas which proved helpful can sometimes be strengthened. This procedure takes time, but it points in the direction of success.

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At this juncture a brainstorming session is sometimes helpful. Brainstorming is a procedure in which random thoughts are suggested without taking time to evaluate them at the time they are made. This procedure can involve any number of people and gives greater opportunity for sharing in planning.

Suggestions from the brainstorming session should be carefully evaluated by a committee. Unsound ideas are eliminated. Pertinent suggestions are grouped and put in order of importance.

Some special days will require more planning than others. Thus special days give opportunity for creative planning and bring variety into the Sabbath School program. However, please note that too much variation can be dangerous and lead to disorganization, which would be tragic to any Sabbath School.

The purpose for observing special days or making mention of them in our Sabbath School program should be for the ingathering of souls. If we can add a little color or make our program a little more attractive and create an appeal that will draw others to our school, then we should feel that we have justified the use of our time, effort, and expense in planning special programs for these special days or occasions.

It must ever be remembered that the tactful follow-up of any contact made is perhaps the most important part of all. There is no good purpose served in finding the contact or creating the interest if we do not put forth every possible effort to follow on through to fruition. Therefore we should plan for this phase of the work as well as for the special program itself. In many cases this will include inviting visitors to our homes after church. All the members should make every gesture of friendliness and show warm hospitality to all, including former members as well as nonmembers.

“A church program may be as intelligently constructed as a modern power machine, but it will not work without the urge of spiritual passion, any more than the machine will function until it is geared to power. It is our task to offer, not only the best equipment modern knowledge can provide, but to

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generate the spiritual energy required for the full release of Christian personality in genuine Christian living. “-Oscar P. Campbell, *The Superintendent Wants to Know* (Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: The Judson Press), pages 29, 30.

“The object of the Sabbath School should not be lost sight of in mechanical arrangements, thus occupying time which should be given to other important matters. We should ever be guarded against forms and ceremonies which will eclipse the real object for which we are laboring. There is danger of carrying system to such an extreme that the Sabbath School will become weariness when, on the contrary, it should be a rest, a refreshment, and a blessing.

“The purity and simplicity of the Sabbath School must not be swallowed up in such an endless variety of forms that sufficient time cannot be devoted to religious interests. The beauty and success of the school are in its simplicity and earnestness in serving God. Nothing can be done without order and regulation, but these may be arranged so as to shut out greater and more important duties. Less should be said to the scholars about the external preliminaries and system, and much more should be said in regard to the salvation of their souls. This must be made the ruling principle of the school.” - *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, page 151.

The Sabbath School leaders must remember their objectives for having these special days. While there may be many activities in connection with these occasions that are appropriate for family or community groups, if they do not help to promote the overall objectives of the Sabbath School there is no valid purpose in giving emphasis to them in our brief program.

Therefore, when you choose the special days you will observe in your school, be sure to determine how they will contribute to the objectives of the Sabbath School. We fear, however, that sometimes there is a tendency to have too many of these special occasions. Though a number of them are suggested in this book, it would not be wise for any school to observe all of them in any one year.

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“Thou shalt not steal” thy teachers’ time, is good advice. Never and under no circumstances should the time taken for these special programs run over and rob the teacher of his thirty-eight minutes for his class period - eight minutes for the five-point program, thirty minutes for teaching the class. Plan short, enthusiastic, and worshipful programs. Vary them. Remember that programs are not for entertainment or show, but are to capture interest and afford opportunity toward attaining Sabbath School objectives, as well as creating a desire to attend further services of the Sabbath School and church.

James DeForest Murch once said, “I have always been a believer in special days and special drives to reach people for Christ and the church. Businessmen use these devices to get customers. We should be as wise as they. To paraphrase the words of Christ in Luke 16:8, ‘The children of light should be as wise as the children of the world.’

“Having said this, I must qualify it by insisting that no Sunday School [Sabbath School] has the right to use such methods if it does not have an educational program that is worth inviting people to enjoy.”

Today, as never before, men, women, and young people are restless. They are forever seeking, but so often not finding. Our Sabbath Schools should be the balm to soothe and fill these needs and longings. Emerson is supposed to have said: “If a man can write a better book, preach a better sermon, or build a better mousetrap than his neighbor, ... the world will make a beaten path to his door.” If our Sabbath School programs week by week are interesting, Christ-centered, well-planned, and well-timed, people will be interested, and, if invited, they will come.

## MY NEW YEAR'S WISH

I trust, my dear, this glad new year,  
Which God now gives to you,  
Will fill your life with love and cheer  
And see your dreams come true.

This year explore time's secret store,  
Life's richest jewels find,  
And carry through its open door  
These treasures to mankind.

If we draw blessings from above,  
What can each new year bring  
But larger floods of light and love  
And sweeter songs to sing?

- Adlai Albert Esteb.  
Firewood, page 80.

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