

HELPS FOR HELPERS IN SUNDAY SCHOOL AND CHILDREN'S CHURCH

by Marilyn Alexander

Introduction:

- Every teacher, especially those who teach younger children, should have a helper—a teenager if not another adult. At least two people are needed in a room for several reasons. (1) In our litigious society, we must be accountable for our actions. (2) If a student needs to leave the room, no child—the one leaving the classroom nor the ones left in the classroom—should be unattended in the church building. This is important for the safety of the child as well as to prevent the student's "doing his/her own thing." (3) Many situations in the classroom require the attention of two people.

Eternal purpose:

- We want these children to be able hear the most important stories in the world, those in the Word of God. This is a very serious task.
- We will do everything possible to make this learning experience positive and, most important, a learning experience. Your help is very important in accomplishing these objectives.

General care:

- Do not speak to a child in a way you would not like his/her parents to hear you speak. Avoid cross words.
- There will be exceptions to the following guidelines. Follow the lead of the teacher, especially when in doubt about what to do.

Before children's church:

- Get the water for snack time.
- Check with "Teacher" to see what you can do to help.
- If there are new children in the service and "Teacher" has not talked to them about coming to the Sunday School room, greet those kids and invite them to children's church or Sunday School. Explain to the parents where we are located and answer their questions.

Dismissing from the adult church service:

- If kids need help (most do not need or want help), help them to the room. Ask parents to carry small children up stairs if there are some.
- Monitor to see that kids are not running or being loud.
- Arriving in the Sunday School room:
- Help all kids get their money into the offering container.
- Help, if necessary, the one whose turn it is to take the container to its designated place.
- Generally, kids below first grade sit in the front row of chairs.

Bathroom break:

- Take girls to the girls' restroom and help them if needed. Do not allow small ones to lock their stalls. If children are very small, help them in the stall and with hand-washing.
- Monitor the boys' bathroom from the door.
- Very small boys may be taken to the girls' restroom and may be assisted by a teacher in the stall and for hand-washing.
- Be sure to wash hands. One paper towel is sufficient for these small hands.

Teaching time:

- If a child is crying or being disruptive, follow "Teacher's" instructions either to have the child sit with an older sibling, sit on your lap, perhaps sit in another place (in the case of an older child), or allow to play quietly in the play area. If child is in the play area, keep your eyes on the child.
- You sit quietly either at the snack/handwork table or in the back row with the students. Do not roam around the room, talk to others, contradict the teacher, answer all the questions, or disrupt in any way.

(No cell phones or mp3 players.)

Snack time:

- See that each student has a paper towel "place mat." (You can have a student do this.)
- Serve the snack (First serving: 5 small crackers or 1/2 doughnut or whatever the teacher says; Second serving: 3 additional crackers or another 1/2 doughnut or whatever the teacher says).
- Pour water for students who want it.
- Help or see that all students clean up their space and throw trash away. Help them wash their mouths and hands and table space with a clean-up wipe if one is needed.
- Pick up soft crumbs from the floor before they get stepped on.

Handwork:

- Encourage all students to do the handwork. If a student wants to go play first, gently corral him/her back to the table. Sometimes, however, it's not worth the struggle to get a child to do this.
- Help those less able to help themselves or help kids who ask for help.
- Each student's work space should be clean and project should be complete before he/she is given permission to play.
- When all students are finished, put away supplies or monitor kids who put away supplies.
- Place the children's handwork along with anything they might have brought to church in the designated place. If there is more than one child from a family, place these kids' work near each others' in that family.

Play time (for younger children after the lesson and handwork):

- Monitor sharing and proper manners at play.
- Sometimes older kids will play games or do puzzles. A helper must be one of the players or supervise.
- Children should play with only one toy at a time. They should put away a toy before getting out a different one.
- This might be a good time to wash the table with a disinfectant wipe and to straighten chairs.

Clean up:

- Children should clean up after themselves. If they got out animals, they should pick up every one, *etc.*
- Play dough should be placed in the containers and tightly sealed. Helpers can check to be sure the lids are on tightly.
- When each child has done his work or helped another, he/she should sit at the designated place.

Closing activity:

- As kids wait to be picked up by parents, Teacher will lead an activity. All kids should sit still or take part in the activity; *e.g.*, songs.

Dismissal:

- Remain in the room while children are being picked up.
- Assist kids in getting their belongings and handwork.
- If a child is not picked up promptly, take that child to his/her adult[s] after checking with "Teacher."
- Do not carry students down stairs; let parents handle this.

After children's church or Sunday School:

- Be sure table is washed with a disinfectant wipe and chairs are straightened.
- Empty cups with water in the bathroom. Place empty cups in the wastebasket.
- Take the trash to the church's dumpster. Return the wastebasket to the room.
- Vacuum if "Teacher" so directs.