

Special Days Can Help Your Class Grow

My Junior class of three girls and one boy huddled in a tiny belfry cubicle. That was five years ago, when I first learned the secret of using special days to help my class grow.

When it was no longer possible to crowd the growing class into that space the boys became a separate class and the girls were given a larger room in the basement. We grew so crowded there that I could not take a step in any direction. Often girls had to stand up around the edges of the room. At last we were given a main auditorium, where the entire church had met a few years before! When I was forced to give up the class because our family was moving, we were averaging over thirty girls and had gathered as many as fifty on one day. One of the main methods we used to inspire such growth was having special days.

What are these special days? They are simply days when you arrange to do something special! The “special” part may be during class or afterwards or both. You may have an interesting guest speaker. One morning a former missionary to China thrilled the children with her authentic witch doctor’s bag and dragon’s eyes. At other times in opening session we had an Indian chief and a ventriloquist. You may prefer to show an exciting film or one of the new Bible cartoons. You may give away something small – sno-cones, kites, souvenirs from another country – the possibilities are endless. You may do something special – have them for a cookout after church in your backyard, or plan a pajama party the night before in the church basement. One of my girls’ favorites was our “Chinese Banquet.” After studying about missions in China, we dressed in robes and ate Chinese food with chop sticks while squatting around a low table.

Special days attract prospects.

I believe in special days for five reasons. First, they attract prospects. A large number of my regular attenders came the first time because of some special attraction. Of course, their motivation wasn’t spiritual at first! But they all heard the Gospel and many received the Savior and became regular attenders. Special days attract more prospects than any other method I know of.

Special days encourage wayward members to return.

I believe in them because they encourage wayward class members to come back. These straying lambs are lured into attendance by the special attraction and the habit of nonattendance is broken. Coupled with visitation and interesting lessons, these events can be effective in bringing the “strays” back to church.

Special days grow the interest of regular attenders.

Special days help to hold the interest of regulars. Yes, we’ve had dropouts, but they’ve been fewer than might be expected, due to the special-day program. Our students know that there will be something fun or interesting to see or do on that day. We announce the days ahead, building excitement. The pupils look forward eagerly to the special day, and their interest is sustained.

Special days show that Christians have fun.

Special days help, too, to shatter the illusion that Christians have little fun and that the church is against recreation and wholesome merriment. It is important to provide for some fun within the church. Special days can help meet this need.

Special days make it easier to make every student a promoter.

The final reason I believe in using special days is that it makes every student an advertiser of your Sunday school. Few children, teens or adults can resist talking about something really exciting or unusual that happened in class. The Young Teen teacher in my church, when teaching about the brass serpent, arranged to have a boa constrictor brought into class. You can be sure the students in that class talked excitedly about their Sunday school lesson to their friends that week!

Attracting prospects, bringing back wayward members, sustaining interest and enthusiasm, coping with the world's negative image of the church, getting people to promote their class – aren't these some of the challenges teachers face? Special days have helped with all of these for my class.

These days may be used in conjunction with the church program or may involve only your own class. I have done both. In planning special events, however, be careful not to compete with other church programs.

Once a month is ideal timing for such activities. This provides ample time for preparation and advertisement, yet doesn't allow many weeks to slip by without some special attraction to draw back-sliders back into the fold.

Use variety in planning the days. Our church now plans one year in advance. As a teacher you should at least plan several months ahead, alternating the kinds of activities offered. One month give something away, another plan a gospel magic or puppet program. Another month bring in an unusual speaker or film, another provide a snack, on another day take class pictures.

When you plan a big day, start well in advance to talk it up and advertise it. Make announcements, hang poster, put it in the newspapers when appropriate, talk to your students about it when you visit them. Let your enthusiasm spill over! Special days can help your class grow!