



**How to Make
It Work
for YOU**

SONday'SCOOL™



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SONday'SCOOL
A World of Difference

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SONday'SCOOL is Sunday School, but it's not. For one thing, it may not be on Sunday. And it should be as little like school as possible—at least, school in the traditional sense of "Sit down, be quiet, and listen." SONday'SCOOL is active . . . it's alive . . . it's COOL! A How-To Manual is available for each of the following new SONday'SCOOL models. Contact: 1 (800) YOU-CARE (968-2273) or www.hopeshare.org



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Make Hope Happen!

The mission of **HopeShare** is to intervene in the lives of children at risk, to offer them a safe place where they can learn to feel good about themselves and be good to others, to break the cycle of despair and share the hope of a personal relationship with **Jesus Christ**.

All proceeds and contributions resulting from the sale of this book will go to The Salvation Army's **"HopeChest"** for abused, neglected, and disadvantaged children.

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Telephone: **1 (800) YOU-CARE (968-2273)**

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What's It All About?

These days, many children never get the chance to sit down with their families for a meal. But children need balanced meals. Children need adult interaction. Children need the family feeling of that shared time around the table. Most important, children need God. **Supper Club** is a tool designed to meet all of these needs. It's a time to share Christian education, good nutrition, and positive values.

The target age group is 6-12 years: elementary school kids. Children of this age—actually, children and adults of any age—are captivated by a good story. The teaching technique used for **Supper Club** is storytelling. Crucial to the success of this model is a trained storyteller.

Also important to this effort is the adult/older teen interaction with children at the supper table. The storyteller draws the example from Scripture. But the conversation at the table is important to the development of the story in the lives of the children. Questions are asked to check on understanding of the story and to give the children "take-home stuff"

to apply to their lives. This is also the time for that crucial adult attention that the children may be lacking at home.

Children in this age group are eager to learn, eager to do, eager to participate. But they won't sit still for just anything. A good story, well told—that's the attraction.



What's So New About That?

The basic framework for the **Supper Club** model of **SONday'SCOOL** comes straight out of the Bible. Jesus loved to teach at the table—or anywhere a meal was being served. In a home with a group of seekers . . . on a hillside at evening with a crowd of 5,000 . . . on a beach at daybreak with his closest friends . . . Jesus was always ready with a life-changing story. That's what **Supper Club** is all about as well.

Christian education—in the form of Sunday School—has been an integral part of church life for more than a century. And in many places, at many times, it has been very successful. Hallelujah! But in some places and at some times, it has become difficult to gather children early on a Sunday morning. It's a day off of school and work when a family can sleep in. It may be a day for traveling to Grandma's for Sunday afternoon dinner. On some Sundays, the sun is shining bright and the beach calls louder than the church bells. The Ten Commandments clearly require that the Sabbath be honored. That doesn't change with time. But for many families, Sunday is just another day—and a great day off from the regular weekday grind. So . . . we teach children about God on another day.

The Salvation Army and many other churches have long accepted this very practical idea: Feed a man's stomach—or a woman's, or a child's—before you feed him or her the Word of God. Many churches are already feeding children on a weekday. Many churches may be providing tutorial after-school care on weekdays. But the element of offering Christian education while modeling family values is missing. Here's what may be different about **Supper Club**:

- ♥ Christian education on a weekday.
- ♥ At least one adult or older teenager at the table with children for a meal.
- ♥ Storytelling during supper by a trained storyteller.
- ♥ Life application activities in small groups following supper.

How Do We Plan Something Like This?

Nothing worthwhile happens without a plan. Planning for the implementation of **Supper Club** is extremely important. Our plan took six months from conception to launch. Of course, the committee was starting from scratch!

- ♥ Birth of an idea
- ♥ Implementation committee selected
- ♥ Strategic plan developed
- ♥ Pilot sites selected
- ♥ Consultation with local church personnel
- ♥ Promotion planning/artwork developed
- ♥ Curriculum identified
- ♥ Local sites canvassed with promotional plan: newspaper articles/flyers/door-to-door visitation
- ♥ Storytelling training of site personnel
- ♥ Inaugural **Supper Club**

Pilot site selection was done by the **Supper Club** committee. Church leaders who want to implement this model will want to consider some of these same factors:



- ♥ **NEED**—many children in community, few children in church. Low attendance at a Sunday morning Sunday School doesn't mean there's no need for an additional Christian education program.
- ♥ **FACILITIES**—adequate space for supper and activities to follow.
- ♥ **CULTURAL SETTING**—for the pilot program, it was important to include a variety of settings. **Supper Club** was piloted in three settings: inner city, suburban, and small town.
- ♥ **PERSONNEL**—the most important issue!! It wasn't the number of leaders at a particular local church that determined the final selection of pilot sites. It was the motivation, interest, energy, and passion of the pastors.

What Staff Will We Need?

Initial staffing needs may not be all that great. As the program grows, personnel needs are likely to grow as well. To begin with, basic staffing is as follows:

- ♥ Kitchen worker
- ♥ Storyteller
- ♥ Three life application classroom workers. (The storyteller might serve as one of these.)
- ♥ Volunteer adults or older teens for guided conversation around the supper table

Of course, the gifts and attitudes of **Supper Club** personnel are extremely important. Energy, spiritual commitment, and passion for sharing the Gospel of Jesus with children are vital to the success of this program. This might require some change in thinking from the standards applied to Christian education on Sunday in a traditional Sunday School. Please don't involve anyone who is not committed to the idea! It will only breed discontent and lack of success.

One of the pilot sites had some older teenagers who had not really been tied into the previous Sunday School program. We were eager to train and involve these teens as leaders. It was a difficult start—but the Lord provided! The result? An older teen serving



as storyteller and coordinator for this program in her church. Other teens are now involved and are modeling Christ in this setting.

People who work with children need to be caring, patient, and giving. Discipline is important, but it cannot be dictatorial! Love is kind, but strong. Patience is embracing, but must not allow distraction.

It is the worker who is excited about the work of God who will attract children to Jesus. **Supper Club** workers must model Christ in a way that will make others want to learn and obey His Word and share it with friends and family.

What Training Is Required?

Because storytelling is such an integral part of the **Supper Club** experience, training in this art—and it is an art—is essential. It's not just reading. It's not just sharing a story from the Bible. It is the intriguing technique of storytelling that will make the Scriptures come alive and live in the children.

There are many who tell stories—but to teach storytelling is a different story! Be sure the trainer you select is a good teacher in the art, and not just an out-of-work actor.

We did some exploration via the Internet, looking for someone who could provide training in the art of storytelling. We found a man—not a Christian—who did storytelling training for a major New York children's publisher. He also practiced professional storytelling in elementary schools across the country.

We set up a one-day seminar for the pastors, workers, and committee members who would be implementing **Supper Club** pilots. It was a profitable day, but the trainer could have been better. He was a great storyteller—but for training purposes, the committee members felt more could have been offered. So be careful whom you choose.

Bible bookstores have a lot of material on storytelling and the teaching method involved. The more you read and read and practice and practice, the better the results for the attention of the children. Of course, it's always good to illustrate the story with a few visuals.

To provide continuing support and training, the **Supper Club** committee ran the pilot program at each site as follows:

- ♥ 4 weeks—Committee conducted storytelling and life application classes
- ♥ 4 weeks—Committee supported and helped with life application classes
- ♥ 2 weeks—Committee attended for review an analysis

What Does the Schedule Look Like?

The program schedule will vary, based on local needs and conditions: school dismissal time, after-school activities, workers' availability, and so on. Following is a guideline for a basic schedule:

4:45 p.m. Welcome/supper/storytelling

5:15 p.m. Games, puzzles, crafts in
life application age groups:

6-8 years

7-9 years

10-12 years

6:00 p.m. Dismissal

The choice of day of the week will depend on other planned activities and, again, staff availability. Just try to choose the day that's best for all concerned. Weekends are often difficult, because of children's other interests and family activities. Monday through Thursday are ideal.

What About Curriculum?

It was the intention of the committee to develop our own curriculum of stories and life application activities, both educational and recreational. Given the press of time and the lack of personnel for the task, this was not accomplished. It is strongly recommended that if adequate personnel are available, original curriculum materials be created.

We used Gospel Light Publishing's 52 Weeks of Bible Stories. It came with Bible stories and related games, puzzles, crafts, and recreational activities, including the learning of Scripture verses. Activities were designated for younger and older children; for life-application purposes, the materials for the youngest and oldest groups lacked a little in terms of targeted age interest. The package was very helpful, however, in that it supplied activities correlated to the story of the week.



What Is It Going to Cost?

Budgetary needs for **Supper Club** will vary, depending on the community and the church situation. Some churches may be able to secure food from food banks or from community, state, or federal subsidy food programs. Some churches may have to plan to absorb the food costs.

Curriculum cost is also a variable. Depending on the number of children being served, the church budget, and available personnel, the curriculum may need to be purchased, adapted, or written. Other costs incurred will include craft supplies and additional educational materials.

And, of course, costs will change due to the success of the program. Initial costs may be small, but expenditures will rise with increased attendance.



Here's an outline of likely costs:

- ♥ **Food, including beverages**
- ♥ **Paper supplies for meal**
- ♥ **Curriculum materials for *Christian education***
- ♥ **Craft, recreational, and educational supplies**
- ♥ **Transportation**
- ♥ **Personnel expenses**
- ♥ **Promotion, including artwork/posters /flyers/ advertising, and promotional giveaways (balloons, tattoos, prizes, etc.)**

What Have the Results Been So Far?

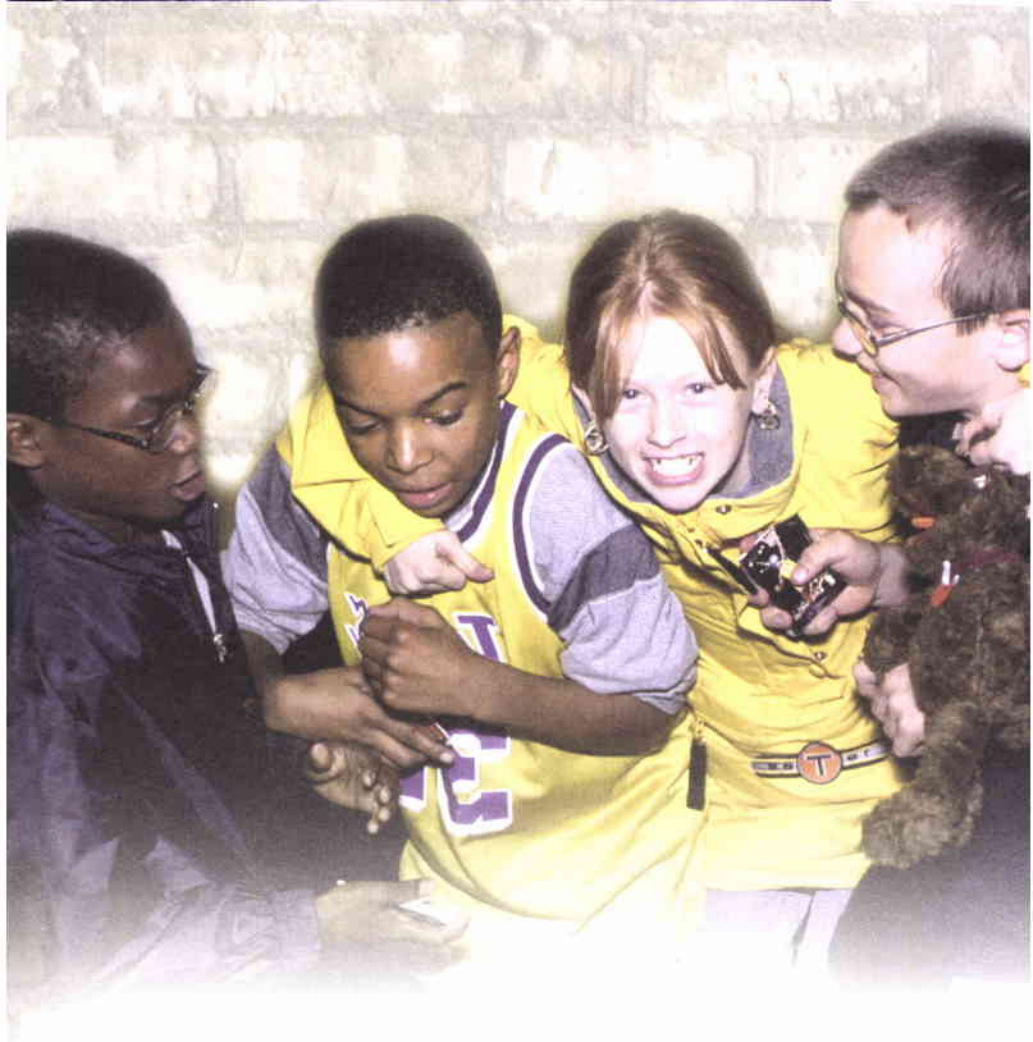


The **Supper Club** Committee met to review the pilot program as implemented and developed at each site. The result has been success!

All three churches where **Supper Club** was piloted have experienced an increase in attendance.

Before the pilots began, the small-town church (in a town of 10,000) had maybe five children attending their traditional Sunday School. The suburban church (in a town of 50,000) was struggling to reach children in the community. The inner-city church (in one of the five boroughs of New York City) had children, but the teens needed to have their interest in this type of ministry sparked, and they needed leadership training. Leadership was lacking at the small-town church, children were lacking at the suburban church, and commitment was lacking at the urban church. Here's what happened:

SETTING	2000 AVERAGE ATTENDANCE	Supper Club ATTENDANCE
Small town	15	40
Suburban	17	40
Urban	47	50



While the attendance at the inner-city church did not dramatically increase as in the other two pilots, leadership development was the success there. One young woman in particular became committed to this kind of ministry to children at risk—and to service of the Master.

What Are the Strengths and Weaknesses?

Here are some pros and cons of Supper Club as experienced at the various pilot sites:

Strengths

- ♥ Increased community awareness of the church and of the benefits of Christian education
- ♥ Increased attendance at Christian education classes
- ♥ Attraction of adults (parents) to the church for the first time
- ♥ Attraction of volunteers to the church's Christian education programs
- ♥ Safe haven for youth living in difficult home and community settings
- ♥ Relationships of children with positive adult role models
- ♥ Increased knowledge of the Bible and of Jesus as Savior
- ♥ Increased knowledge of biblical principles for living

Weaknesses

- ♥ **Model components not always implemented as planned**
- ♥ **Curriculum selection**
- ♥ **Lack of preparedness of volunteers**

Where Does It Go From Here?

Supper Club will continue at all of the pilot sites. There will be logistical adaptation for a better fit in each place, but the success of the program is evident. The benefits are well recognized.

It was never the plan for **Supper Club** to replace a successful Sunday School program, but rather to provide Christian education to children who don't make it to the church door on Sunday morning. It may be that those who come to **Supper Club** on weekdays will eventually want to join in worship on Sunday morning. And there may still be the need for a Sunday morning Christian education class of the more traditional kind. But the children reached by this program were mostly those who were not a part of the traditional Sunday School program.

What's the bottom line?

- ♥ More children were influenced by the Spirit and the Word of God.
- ♥ More children were reached by the church.
- ♥ More children were in a safe, positive atmosphere with people who cared about them.

The **Supper Club** model of **SONday'SCOOL** was successful in the pilot projects. Children were changed, leaders were changed, and churches were changed for the better. If there is a need for alternative Christian education in your church . . .

SONday'SCOOL™

AND



IS THE TOOL!



Make Hope Happen!

