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So **you**'ve been asked to . . .

# Teach Church School



JESSIE SCHUT

## Acknowledgments

**Jessie Schut is a teacher, a freelance writer, and has a passion for spiritual growth. She lives in Courtenay, British Columbia.**

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**M**ary Brown called last week to ask if you'd consider teaching a church school class. When you hesitated, she gave you a week to think about it. Now you're wondering what your reply should be.

There are many reasons to say yes. After all, church school is a vital ministry. A study conducted by the Lilly Foundation shows that a relevant church education program is one of the best means of nurturing faith. In our busy world the need for church school teachers is usually pressing. Perhaps your own children are asking you to be their teacher. Perhaps people see you as a natural teacher because you love children and youth. Maybe you'd feel guilty if you turned down Mary's request.

But, surprisingly, there are also valid reasons why you should say no.

The first part of this pamphlet will help you think about your choice; the second part will provide useful information about the job you've been asked to do. So find yourself a quiet place, grab a pencil and paper, and invest an hour or two of thought in this important decision.

## What's Teaching Church School All About?

You may be thinking, "If I can work teaching into my schedule, I'll do it. The decision is really not that complicated." But agreeing to teach church school deserves more thought than that—your interaction with your students may have eternal implications. You may turn a rebellious youth around. You may change the life of a lonely child. You may challenge a seeker to commit her life to God.

Jesus had harsh words for those who took their teaching and leadership responsibilities lightly. He reproached the teachers of the law and the Pharisees for how they "shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces" (Matt. 23:13). He called them "whitewashed tombs"—good-looking on the outside but rotten within. And he warned those who minimized the importance of children's faith: "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to sin, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were drowned in the depths of the sea" (Matt. 18:5-6).

Teaching church school is a wonderful privilege and an awesome responsibility. It involves

- telling God's precious story to impressionable hearts.
- modeling Christ's love so learners will see Jesus in you.
- sharing your own faith journey with your students.
- praying for the needs of your students.
- serving those you lead.
- being willing to grow spiritually yourself.
- fulfilling the job description your church has laid out for you.
- being dependable, consistent, and committed to your task.

## Making a Choice About Teaching

Perhaps you recall someone from your school days who was "the perfect teacher." Perhaps there is someone in your church who fits that bill, and you can't imagine being compared to this paragon. You feel you don't measure up; you're not sure that you have "the right stuff" to be a teacher.

Just what *do* you need to be a church school teacher?

### You need to have love.

No amount of workshops, teacher education programs, training, books, or magazines can equip a teacher with love. Teachers can't manufacture love on demand. Love is a gift that God gives us through the work of the Holy Spirit. Even when teachers aren't feeling especially loving, they know they can rely on the Spirit to act through them as they show God's love to their students.

A good teacher has three loves:

- **Love of God.** Love for the God who created, saved, and sustains us is the strongest motivation for teaching. Having experienced God's love, a teacher can respond in obedience and love, serving God with gratitude and devotion.
- **Love of the student.** Jesus is our best model of love. He looked on his followers with compassion, reaching out to meet their needs. Jesus cared about their eternal destinies, about their struggles with