

# Chapter 02-Sunday School Attendance

## Preface:

Sometimes I may not have been in Sunday School for all the right reasons, but I was there. I turned out ok. This is my story.

## Sunday School Attendance

My younger brother and I attended Sunday School like most kids in our area. We didn't go every Sunday depending upon work on the farm or visits to aunts and uncles. A big change occurred when our church started offering perfect attendance pins. My mother was determined that my brother and I were going to get those pins. We lived in the country on a farm. Part of the local culture at that time was an attitude that farm kids weren't as good as city kids. My mother was determined that perfect attendance pins were a means to dispel that attitude. My brother and I went every Sunday, rain or shine, blizzard or heat wave, field work or no field work.

There was an item called a visitation card that was key to perfect attendance. Our family occasionally traveled about 30 miles to Des Moines to visit relatives on Sunday. The visit always included one of those wonderful Sunday dinners. Even as a kid, I loved to eat, and I looked forward to those visits. We left early, right after chores, so we could go to Sunday School at St. John's Lutheran in Des Moines. It was my Mom's requirement that my brother and I get a signed visitation card. That card was required to keep our "perfect" attendance record intact. We went to great lengths to make sure we got a visitation card.

As I got older I discovered there were Sunday School activities other than sitting in class. Never one to not look for a way to get out of class, opportunities were explored. One fall, at the start of Sunday School, the teachers were looking for two kids to go from classroom to classroom to collect the offering and the attendance records. A classmate, who lived on the farm next to ours, and I volunteered for the job. We knew opportunity when we saw it. We did that job for several years. We got credit for attendance and didn't have to sit in class. What a deal! We might not have learned all the biblical lessons we were supposed to but we "learned" the longest route to cover all the classrooms and we counted the money at least twice. We could complete our job just as Sunday



School was being dismissed.

Over the years I collected the perfect attendance pin and a long string of bars to hang from the pin. The pin and the bars are somewhere in the bottom of my jewelry box. To my brother and I, the pin and bars were just something we had to wear on our suit jackets. To my mother, they were a shining example that her country kids could also have perfect attendance at Sunday School and were "as good as" those city kids.

Achieving perfect attendance exposed me to a lot of nice people and some of them had a positive influence on me and my growing up. I met adults who had a philosophy different than my dad. I met people who took their kids places on Saturday and Sunday to do fun things. On the farm we very seldom did that as work always came first. My dad loved to farm so much he couldn't understand why people wanted a day off. Capturing that pin and those bars was an important achievement to my mother. My brother and I were her shining examples that her country kids were equals. Our efforts and reasoning to obtain those perfect attendance pins may not have always been correct; but better to be in church and Sunday school for the wrong reason than to not be there at all.

When my wife and I started our kids in Sunday School at ages four and seven we tried to go every Sunday. However, obtaining a collection of perfect attendance pins was not even considered. We wanted our kids to meet other people and learn from others as well as from their parents.

As an adult I have never worried about maintaining perfect attendance in church or Sunday school. I attend most Sundays and I try to get as much out of church and adult Sunday school as I can. I listen, pay attention, and participate. So perhaps all those years of skipping class to collect offerings and attendance sheets has helped me pay close attention in church as an adult. The Lord works in mysterious ways you know!!