

BIG RESULTS

Sunday School & Black Church Life



Dr. Mark A. Croston, Sr., Compiler

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INTRODUCTION



Growing up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, some of my earliest memories of church are related to Sunday School. My dad, Rev. Nathaniel M. Croston, Sr., was the pastor of a small church, but he also served as president of the Pennsylvania Eastern District Congress of Christian Education. Our church's Sunday School was held after the 11 am worship service, so often I would accompany him to visit and encourage the Sunday Schools of several churches that were a part of the district on his way to our church.

After my dad died and a new pastor came, our church hooked up with a group called the American Sunday School Union. Rev. Howard Cartwright and several others of these urban Sunday School missionaries encouraged the Sunday School work in our church and gathered key youth from several churches for Bible study and basketball. It was really leadership development and discipleship, but they never told us that. Out of this group at least nine of us have been serving in full time Christian ministry. Additionally, others have been serving as deacons, trustees, Sunday School workers and more.

Growing up with these experiences I got to see first hand that churches can really achieve "Big Results" through Sunday School. I guess it is providential that after serving for 26 years as pastor of East End Baptist Church, Suffolk, Virginia and for many years as the lead instructor for the Baptist Sunday School and BTU Congress of Virginia, I would spend the latter days of my ministry career as the national director of Black Church Partnerships, LifeWay Christian Resources, leading a staff that assists churches in building strong Sunday Schools across the country.

Many churches are lead by eloquent speakers and powerful pulpiteers, but many have not explored Sunday School work and its untapped power for making disciples and growing the church.

This situation points out the plight of many churches in the Black community today. Pastors and laypersons are often unprepared to provide the leadership needed to build strong Sunday Schools in the community. This unreadiness points out the need for qualitative resources that equip church persons to be strong in the area of Sunday School work. This book is an attempt to speak to that need.

A great challenge for the church in the Black community as we face the 21st century, is to develop strong Sunday Schools. We will not equip our churches to be on mission for God unless we somehow reverse the trend of weakness in Sunday School. In a high tech space age, there is no room for mediocrity in religious education. The church that is adequately equipped to prepare the people for the challenge of being Christian in today's society must be built upon the basis of a strong, relevant religious education. Without this accomplishment the church in the Black community will be impotent as it attempts to deal with the problems we face today.

One of the phenomena that needs to be studied by churches serving the Black community is the Sunday School regression of the latter 20th century. During the 19th century, immediately after the Civil War, Sunday School was one of the most popular events in the life of the church of the slaves. Churches were jammed with people attending Sunday Schools which had a curriculum relevant to the Black community. In many churches the Sunday School was the most popular service rendered. With its curriculum including a heavy focus on literacy, it was able to perform a valuable service to the newly emancipated slaves. Prior to the days of the proliferation of public schools in the Black community, the Sunday School was the major equipper, laying the foundation for a life of education. However, during the 20th century there has been a decline in Sunday School attendance. Today, it is estimated that only 10 to 15 percent of Blacks attend Sunday School regularly. Clearly, Sunday School has slipped in its importance in the soul of the Black church. This phenomenon needs careful analysis. We need to understand how to reverse this debilitating trend impacting the churches serving the Black community. *Big Results: Sunday School & Black Church Life* is a call

for Sunday School renewal in Black and Multi-ethnic churches. It is a battle cry to rally the forces of goodwill, to revive the quality Sunday School experience for people of color. It is a declaration of war against biblical illiteracy and the lack of religious education that are far too prevalent in many churches. It is a call to “Rise up, O people of God,” and “Learn, brother, learn.”

The contemporary church in the Black community most often is a practitioner of the “mini” Sunday School. This tragic reality is sad because it is not necessary to be victimized by the trend of non-involvement in religious education. This book is based upon the premise that it is possible to turn a “mini” Sunday School into a “maxi” Sunday School. It is an attempt to turn our Sunday Schools from minimum involvement to maximum involvement. The evidence exists that it is possible to involve large percentages of Black Christians in Sunday School and/or small group Bible study programs today. The facts are there. The models are there. The understanding is there. It is no longer necessary for the Black church to experience “mini” Sunday School.

There is a crisis in Black religious education today. This crisis may be seen through the existence of many common characteristics of Black Sunday School work. Symptoms ranging from noninvolvement to a poor quality of curriculum point out this situation. Leadership often leans toward the idea that everything can be accomplished in the BIG room through dynamic worship, powerful preaching and a BIG room conference every now and then. Laypersons often have resources that are grossly inadequate and obsolete. Curriculum materials tend to be too narrow and are sometimes amiss in their focus. The fact is that our churches are inadequately prepared to meet the discipleship needs of the people. The result is a crippled church crippling its people. This book hopefully will be a strategy weapon in the arsenal for dealing with the crisis in Black religious education. It is hoped that it can begin to open some doors of opportunity and improvement for the religious education of the people.

The crisis in Black religious education has a negative impact upon Black churches. Instead of being giants in discipling people to the Lord, they often draw big crowds with little spiritual depth. Instead of providing the maximum resources available today to help people grow to their potential, many churches exist on the periphery of involvement. This is due to a basic lack of awareness of the possibilities for maximizing the potential of their flocks. It is the conviction of the writer that the Black community deserves the best. However, the crisis in religious education usually means that we get far less than what is available at this time.

Because of the crisis in Black religious education, religion in the Black community may be endangered by weaknesses of the churches in the Black community. The Black church needs to be aware of the possibilities for growth and strength as it seeks to equip the people for doing the Lord's work. One of the worst things that could happen is for people to enter the door of the church and get shortchanged by its inadequate response.

In many ways, Charles Dickens' immortal lines in, *A Tale of Two Cities* today can characterize the state of Black religious education. "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times." The present generation in the Black community experiences the strongest manifestation of Black church life in history. On the other hand, there are glaring weaknesses still present. As with churches of all races and denominations, the churches in the Black community find themselves having to struggle in the midst of progress and failure.

It is the best of times. Our preachers are among the best, as a class, in terms of oratorical skills and delivery. Our social action ministries are models worthy of emulation by other racial and denominational groups. The freedom in the Black pulpit makes it the freest place on the surface of this earth. Our social justice concern leaves many other racial groups and denominations far behind. Our refusal to dichotomize the gospel makes it possible for us to have strong holistic involvement in meeting the total needs of the people.

It may also be the worst of times. Ninety percent of our people refuse to go and participate in a quality Sunday School or small group Bible study experience. Our people are plagued by massive biblical illiteracy! The organization in the church with the greatest potential for reaching people for Christ is neglected and under-utilized for this purpose. Regardless of whether it is the best of times or the worst of times, this is our only time and it is up to us to do something about it—today.

This book recognizes the fact that we have arrived at some milestones that are pregnant with implications for Sunday School work in Black churches today. One such milestone is the identification of groups of churches that have managed to reverse the trend of the mini Sunday School in the Black community. They have managed to take churches that had poor, weak Sunday Schools and turn them into effective models for reaching many people with quality religious education. They have taken people who have come out of traditional churches, involved them in a specialized approach to Sunday School work, and have seen them become masters of Sunday School work.

We have arrived at a day when the principles for growing a Sunday School successfully are known entities. As a result of studying the methodology of these effective “pro-Sunday School growth” churches it is now possible to show how it can be done. This book is an attempt to share that information to the glory of God and the effectiveness of His church.

It is no longer necessary for pastors to languish in frustration about how to grow a strong Sunday School. It is no longer necessary for laypersons to puzzle over the ABCs of basic Sunday School work. It is no longer necessary for congregations to be weak in this area. The information is available. We know what to do—today.

It is a new day in Black Sunday School work! It is the beginning of a generation of Sunday School researchers who focus on the Black Sunday School experience. Successful models of Sunday School effectiveness have been studied and analyzed to determine how they do it. Today, books are being written based on this research about churches in the Black community.

The purpose of *Big Results: Sunday School & Black Church Life* is to provide the basics of Sunday School organization for churches serving the Black community. This is an attempt to answer the question, “How should we organize our Sunday School to maximize our growth potential?”

This book is for pastors, ministers of education, Sunday School directors and workers for all age levels, denominational servants, as well as college and seminary professors. It will provide a practical guide for effectively organizing Sunday School in the Black community.

Big Results: Sunday School & Black Church Life is a rewrite and update of *Basic Sunday School Work in the Black Community* (copyright 1988) by Dr. Sid Smith.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark', with a large, sweeping loop at the end.

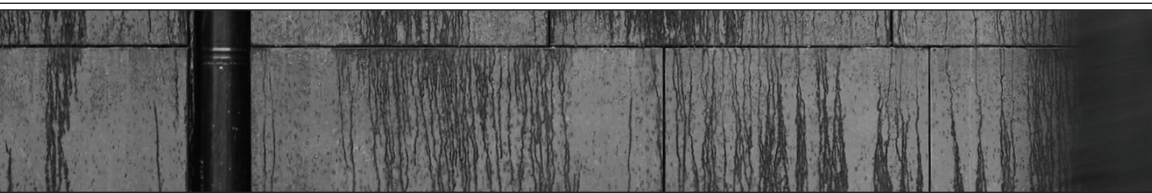
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Compiler

CHAPTER 1

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL CHALLENGE IN BLACK CHURCH LIFE



Mark Croston, Sr.



Pastor S.A. Tired (Sick And Tired) is frustrated because he cannot get many of his members to attend Sunday School. He has tried everything he knows, to no avail. It seems that the more he encourages his people to attend, the more difficult it is to get them to respond. In his frustration he has sought many ways to learn about how to reach people through the Sunday School. This pastor may be typical of many who experience the phenomenon of the micro Sunday School in Black church life.

In many Black churches today, only 10 to 15 percent of the members of the church are enrolled in the Bible teaching, disciple making program we call Sunday School. The fact of the micro Sunday School in Black churches has impacted the ability of the church to be what the Lord would have it. Instead of being strong in the Word, many of these churches find themselves spiritual weaklings. Despite excelling in other aspects of church work, they find it difficult to reach people and make true strong disciples of Jesus Christ.

Rev. G.I. Able (God Is Able) pastors a church that has a large or macro Sunday School. Seventy percent of his members are involved in the Sunday School ministry. He has discovered how to reach and disciple the Black community through the Sunday School. He has learned how to apply the growth principles in his situation in order to make his Sunday School and church grow. He is a practitioner of the Sunday School essentials in Black church life.

Both the micro Sunday School and the macro Sunday School exist in Black church life today. This reminds us that it is possible for a small struggling Sunday School to reverse that trend and enlist many people in the Sunday School ministry of the church.

WHY THE “MICRO” SUNDAY SCHOOL?

Why is it so difficult to get many of our people to attend Sunday School today? What historical development contributed to the fact of the micro Sunday School? What are some of the contributing factors that lead us to a lack of attendance in Sunday School in our Black churches today?

The following theories are advanced as an attempt to explain the low participation in Sunday School in Black church life today:

The Historical Obstacle Theory

Certain historical obstacles were erected during slavery that yielded the conclusion that religious education was not important for Blacks. For example, if slaves had no souls (as some claimed), then why evangelize or religiously educate them? If slaves were a different kind of people, then why religiously educate them?

This attitude on the part of slavery era churches, mostly white, led to the idea that religious education was not important for Blacks. Perhaps this idea has been instilled into the Black community to the point that it has survived for more than a century after the ending of slavery. The point is that certain historical obstacles have contributed to the development of an attitude that diminishes the importance of religious education and Sunday School in Black church life.

The Mysticism Versus Biblicism Theory

This theory holds that during slavery most Blacks were mystics rather than biblicists. Mysticism dominated the slave religious experience because most were not permitted to become literate. Biblicism assumes literacy. However, since the slaves were functionally illiterate they found it difficult to study the Bible. They discovered that they could have a genuine experience with God apart from studying the Bible for themselves. Therefore, they became mystics and depended upon their direct relationship to God rather than direct personal study of the Bible. Today it is possible that mysticism still dominates, although few Blacks are illiterate today. The phenomenon of relying upon

experience more than personal Bible study may have carried over from those early days when Black Christians could do no better. Sunday School assumes that our legitimate experiences have to be grounded in Biblical truth. Biblical truth is based upon the practice of studying the Word of God more than upon one's personal experience with the Lord to determine the nature of reality and Christian growth.

The Oral Versus Literary Tradition Theory

This theory holds that many Blacks are oral tradition oriented rather than literary tradition oriented because of the lingering influences of the African tradition. In Africa there was a heavy dependence on the oral tradition which the slaves brought over to America and baptized into their religion. There is a contradiction between the traditional Sunday School approach and the oral traditions we employ in worship. Therefore, some people find Sunday School to be a less than exciting way for them to learn about God.

The Children's Syndrome

Sunday School is for children only, according to this view. The church does not expect adults to participate in the Sunday School program. Not having overcome the original philosophy about the targets of Sunday School participation, these churches automatically write off a large percentage of their target audience. Children are encouraged to participate but adults are not.

The Poor Teaching Syndrome

This theory holds that, due to poor teaching, students are discouraged from attending Sunday School. The church that experiences the poor teaching syndrome does not guarantee that its teachers are adequately trained to make Sunday School an interesting and challenging experience. Therefore, teaching procedures are used which turn people off rather than turn them on. In Sunday Schools of this type, it is often impossible to get people to go back to Sunday School once they have visited because of the poor teaching that takes place in the class. Churches are challenged to make sure that their Sunday

School workers know what they are doing and are well qualified to turn people on in Sunday School. Sometimes churches fail at this point. When they do, it creates a barrier to enthusiastic participation in Sunday School.

The Negative Leadership Influence Syndrome

This occurs when significant leaders in the church behave in such ways as to give the signal that Sunday School is not very important. Often a sincere but naive pastor is the chief offender. For example, what does it say to the church when a pastor is not involved in Sunday School? What does it say when there is no regular workers' meeting? What does it say when the Sunday School is rarely, if ever, promoted as an important item on the agenda of the church program? Unmistakably, the hidden language of such behavior conveys the message that Sunday School is not very important. When this message is delivered to the congregation, and especially the significant leaders, it is difficult to get people to come.

The Worship is Where it's At Mindset

This mindset sees worship as the dominate function of a church. It believes that worship fulfills the attractional, inspirational and educational functions of the church. A church will inevitably have a philosophy about its main purposes and how to achieve them. When a church believes that all of these main functions can be accomplished in worship, it sees its primary role as providing an inspirational worship service on Sunday to carry the people through the remainder of the week. However, if it truly understands the process of education and discipleship, it will focus on developing a strong religious education and discipleship ministry. This will include a dynamic Sunday School that will help equip people to deal with the problems they confront during the week from a biblical perspective. The problem arises when a church embraces the worship function at the expense of the true discipleship function. When that happens, the church will emphasize a dynamic worship service rather than a tremendous educational and discipleship program. The ideal approach is to have a strong thrust in both areas. It is not "either or," but "both-and."

The Teaching-Oriented Sunday School Approach

One of the biggest problems contributing to the scarcity of Black participation in Sunday School is the approach that is used. There are two approaches to doing Sunday School work. One is the “teaching oriented” Sunday School (TOSS) approach and the other is the “growth oriented” Sunday School (GOSS) approach. The teaching-oriented Sunday School approach usually yields a situation in which teaching is emphasized exclusively. The growth-oriented Sunday School approach, however, embraces the best of teaching methodology, but it also puts priority on reaching people. It does not sit back and wait for people to decide they want to come to Sunday School. Rather, it goes out and gets them and provides an excellent teaching experience along with other church experiences.

The growth-oriented Sunday School approach focuses on outreach, evangelism, quality Bible study, fellowship, ministry, as well as undergirding and interpreting the work of the church and denomination. When churches use the teaching oriented Sunday School approach, the above-mentioned focuses are not necessarily involved. Consequently, the church will teach those who show up but it will not have the impetus to go and reach new people.

These are some theories that attempt to explain why it is difficult to get significant Black participation in Sunday School today. There are many other reasons not mentioned here. However, these should provide an insight into contributing factors for the micro Sunday School in Black church life. Much research needs to be done in this area to discover why most Black Christians do not attend Sunday School.

HOW SUNDAY SCHOOLS GROW IN BLACK CHURCH LIFE

While it still appears true that most Black Sunday Schools experience the micro Sunday School, it is also true that there are many Black Sunday Schools that experience the macro Sunday School. It is now possible to study models of effective Sunday School growth in the Black community and examine from a Black perspective, how Sunday Schools grow in reaching people today.

Some general observations, based on the study of macro Sunday Schools, reveal the following:

1. The pastor's readiness is the crucial issue that makes the difference in whether the Sunday School will experience tremendous growth. A unifying characteristic woven through the experience of all the macro Sunday Schools proves the fact that the pastor is the key. Unless the pastor has a vision for the Sunday School, it will not be an effective Sunday School. This is not a ministry of a church that can be left entirely up to laypersons. The pastor must lead. He must be ready.

This observation yields the following questions for the pastor:

- Does he have the philosophy that growth through the Sunday School ought to be a priority in his ministry?
- Is he committed to building the church through the Sunday School?
- Is he aware of the vast resources and programs available to assist a Sunday School in its efforts to grow?
- Is he involved in the Sunday School?

The experience of our churches in the study group reveals that unless the pastor is ready to lead, the church will not be ready to grow through the Sunday School.

2. The type of Sunday School program makes a difference. There are basically two types of Sunday School programs: the growth-oriented Sunday School (GOSS) program and the teaching-oriented Sunday School (TOSS) program. A church usually has an effective Sunday School for physical and discipleship growth only if it uses a growth-oriented Sunday School program. The growth-oriented Sunday School program prioritizes growth, understands basics of Sunday School growth, and implements growth principles to reach and develop people through Sunday School, in addition to providing excellent Bible teaching experiences. All of the Sunday School programs experiencing tremendous growth today are using these growth principles.

Pastors should be aware of the qualitative differences in various Sunday School programs and select the approaches that are built on tried and proven success principles. The greatest question that can and should be asked about a potential Sunday School approach under consideration by a pastor is: 'Does it work?'

3. Commitment to growth through the Sunday School is a priority. While there are many ways to grow a church, these churches have in common the commitment to growth through the Sunday School. A good question for discussion is whether it makes any difference about the way a church grows. Some churches emphasize having an electrifying music program as a strategy for growth. Others emphasize dynamic preaching and soul-stirring worship services. Others emphasize social concern and social action involvement. Even others focus on building the family unit as a strategy. Does it really make a difference the way a church chooses to grow? As it relates to these churches, it does apparently make a difference. It makes so much of a difference that they chose to make their priority growing through the Sunday School.

What this means to the church is summed up in these principles:

- A pastor must have the philosophy that the Sunday School is the most effective way to grow a church.

- A pastor may wish to combine two or more strong emphasis areas, including the Sunday School, as a high priority for growing the church.
 - The church may have to be converted to the point of view that Sunday School growth can be a very effective way of church growth.
4. Potential members are systematically identified and enlisted. The churches with macro Sunday Schools know who their prospects are. Their prospect file is a list of the names of persons who could be coming to their Sunday School if properly and persistently invited. They do not go after 'everybody' with a scattergun approach. They go after specific individuals who have been identified as prospects for involvement in their Sunday School program.

This means that every church wishing to grow through the Sunday School needs to have an excellent up-to-date prospect file. Sunday School growth methodology recommends that a church have a prospect file with at least the number of prospects equal to the number of persons it has enrolled. A church may have to start a prospect file.

5. There is a willingness to start new teaching units. These churches are not hesitant to start new classes. They realize that one of the trends in Sunday School growth is that new classes tend to grow faster than older ones. Therefore, a class should be started when a church wants to reach people. It should not be started only when the old class is bursting at the seams. This philosophy is part of a growth approach to reach more people through the Sunday School.

What this means for a church is that workers and members need to be oriented to the point of view that they can multiply by dividing. Class size should be generally consistent with the guidelines for ideal class size based on the best of Sunday School science.

6. The selection of workers is made with the greatest care. One of the common points of all of these Sunday Schools is that they have good, strong workers. Great care is taken in the selection of those who work in Sunday School. For these churches, worker selection is a sacred task. Standards and qualifications should be

taken into consideration when workers are selected. Deep seasons of prayer should precede the selection of those who work in the Sunday School. An implication for careful worker selection means that churches will need to set and enforce standards for those who would work in Sunday School. There is no room in a growth-oriented Sunday School for the slothful worker or the uncommitted person who just routinely accepts the job of working in Sunday School for another year. Ideally, the persons who are selected as Sunday School workers ought to be those who feel that God has called them to serve.

7. The churches make sure that all of the workers receive first-rate training. The conclusion of these pastors is that trained workers make all the difference in the world. They see their churches as having a responsibility to make sure that when persons commit themselves to work in Sunday School, they receive the best training available to equip them to do so effectively and efficiently.

Churches that accept this challenge must then have qualitative training programs for their Sunday School workers. Sometimes these are provided through denominational sources. Other times the churches may have to create them.

8. Sufficient teaching space is made available. In the churches with the macro Sunday Schools, there is a great effort made in providing adequate teaching space for Sunday School. Space is wisely utilized in the educational facility. Some churches have well developed Sunday School classrooms and very efficient educational buildings. For example, the largest Sunday School in our study was also the one that had the largest amount of Sunday School classrooms.

What this means for the church is that more attention needs to be given to providing adequate teaching space for the Sunday School if it expects to experience growth. Inadequate space can actually work against the growing of a Sunday School.

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In our churches with the super Sunday Schools, the workers' meeting is a very important part of the Sunday School growth process. It is not merely a casual appendage. It is an integral part of being ready to produce a growth-oriented Sunday School.

Resources are available that will show churches how to have a dynamic, productive weekly workers meeting. This is a time of great importance in preparing to grow a dynamic Sunday School.

9. The Sunday School has an effective contact program. The growing Sunday School usually has a weekly plan for contacting prospects, visitors and members. It does not sit back and wait for people to decide on their own that they want to come to Sunday School. The church is vigorously involved in going after people.
10. In-depth Bible study is the foundation of the curriculum. The Bible is the textbook and personal study guides provide needed support. Even when the curriculum is broadened to include other emphases, the Bible is still the primary textbook. In-depth Bible study feeds the deepest needs of persons and motivates them to return to the Sunday School for this worthwhile experience.

What this means for churches is that they should provide more than a superficial experience in studying the Bible. They should focus on providing answers to all of the questions of life relating to the Word of God.

11. There is an emphasis on involving adults in the Sunday School. Our macro Sunday Schools have an unusually high number of adults attending. They have apparently rejected the idea that if you get the child you will get the parent. For them it works the other way: when you get the parent you will get the child.

Churches have an immense challenge in reaching adults through the Sunday School. Strategies should be devised for enlisting adult participation and involvement.

12. The Sunday School class should provide an opportunity to minister to the total needs of persons. In the Sunday School approach of the churches in our study there is an emphasis on the ministry dimension. A Sunday School class is more than just a Bible teaching session. It is a small group context where people care about each other and help meet each other's need.

Churches need to explore the possibilities of involving their members in ministry to one another through the Sunday School methodology. This can be an effective network for doing the work of the ministry in the church.

13. Personal evangelism permeates the Sunday School program. In our churches with macro Sunday Schools, evangelism is a priority. They have a vision for the lost and a commitment to introduce people to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Sunday School classroom is a place where evangelism is implemented. The Sunday School teacher and worker are expected to be effective soul winners. Sunday School workers are expected to be involved with their members and prospects to make sure that they have an opportunity to have a right relationship with God.

For the church this means that evangelistic training is a must for Sunday School workers. Reports have indicated that of all of the persons in the United States who are not enrolled in an evangelistic type Sunday School, the chances are only one in 264 that they will ever accept Christ and be baptized. However, of those persons who are involved in an evangelistic type Sunday School, the chances are one in three that they will find Jesus as Lord and Savior. What an effective way to reach people for Christ!

These basics may be summed up as follows:

1. Make a commitment to growth,
2. Identify and enroll prospects,
3. Start new classes and departments,
4. Enlist workers,
5. Train workers,
6. Provide space and equipment,
7. Conduct workers meetings with regularity,
8. Make weekly contacts,
9. Teach the Bible to win the lost and develop the saved.

When churches do these principles well, experience demonstrates that they can grow a Sunday School.

DEVELOPING A GROWTH-ORIENTED SUNDAY SCHOOL

We have seen that the way to grow a Sunday School in Black Church life is to organize a growth-oriented Sunday School instead of a teaching-oriented Sunday School. The growth-oriented Sunday School is organized to reach people for Sunday School and, therefore, is an effective tool for growing the church. In order to grow a Sunday School it is important to understand some of the principles related to developing a growth oriented Sunday School. The following principles have been helpful to many churches as they have organized to grow their Sunday School.

1. Prioritize outreach as well as quality Bible study. In the growth oriented Sunday School, outreach is the top priority. That means the major thrust of Sunday School is its outreach responsibility to reach new people for Christ and the church.

2. Emphasize adult participation in Sunday School. Adults must be the targets for Sunday School involvement as well as children. The church that goes after adults will quickly discover that it has no problem in reaching children because the parents will bring their kids. We must not dismiss the adult for involvement in Sunday School work. Where else would they receive their quality, systematic Bible study?
3. Have significant pastoral involvement. The pastor is the key for a church organizing a growth-oriented Sunday School. Without his leadership it usually will not happen. If he is not active in this area, he can inadvertently become a stumbling block to the progress of the church in Sunday School. Usually a church will rise no higher than its pastor. This is especially true in the area of Sunday School growth.
4. Provide systematic training for the workers. It is important that systematic quality training is provided for those who work in Sunday School. Workshops need to be attended. Church Study Courses need to be taken in areas pertinent to the Sunday School workers. The church has the responsibility of making sure that the persons who work in Sunday School know what they are doing and are well equipped to do it effectively.
5. Make the Sunday School ministry-oriented. In the growth-oriented Sunday School, a Sunday School class is more than a place where Bible teaching occurs. The Sunday School class is also a place of ministry. When people are hurting, the Sunday School class needs to minister to their needs. The growth-oriented Sunday School cares about people and becomes involved in the issues of their life.
6. The Growth-Oriented Sunday School should be punctual. Punctuality is a must for maximum effectiveness in the Sunday School that will grow. Chronic tardiness must be overcome if the Sunday School is to operate at a high level of efficiency. Discover and utilize various means to encourage people to be on time.

7. Use good personal study guides and other support resources. There are many excellent resources available to churches that wish to learn how to grow. These resources should be studied and implemented where feasible. A church does not have, to languish in ignorance. The resources are there for use in Sunday School growth.
8. Use up-to-date methods. The modern church is challenged to use the best methodology for teaching Sunday School. The time is past for being infantile in this area. The church needs to develop a good teacher training program and utilize the most effective methods to make the lessons live for the students.
9. Make the Sunday School evangelistic. The thrust of the Sunday School in the growth-oriented approach is to reach new people for Christ. Therefore, evangelism must be at the heart of this approach. All Sunday School workers need to be well trained in personal evangelism. Sunday School class members need to be equipped to share their faith. Lost persons should be involved in Sunday School classes and should be targets of evangelism. The growth oriented Sunday School attempts to reach the lost.
10. Provide adequate space for the Sunday School. Churches have discovered that the provision of adequate space greatly impacts their effectiveness in reaching people through the Sunday School. A church should look beyond having only a large sanctuary as its education facility. Adequate educational space for a Sunday School can make all the difference in the world in growing Sunday School. A church needs to study the space requirements as recommended by experts and then work toward providing adequate space.
11. Maintain the proper teacher-student ratio. It is important that a class not be too large or too small. When a class becomes too large, it is difficult to maintain a growth posture. If it is too small, it is difficult to maintain a growth momentum. There are guidelines for class sizes and teacher ratios. Churches should find out what they are and try to implement them.

12. Use principles of Sunday School growth. There are principles for growing Sunday Schools that are tried and proven. The Sunday School that would grow would be wise to implement these principles. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. The research has already been done and it is possible to know how to grow a Sunday School today. The Sunday School growth principles provide an excellent avenue for effective Sunday School growth.
13. Organize the Sunday School to grow. A Sunday School can be organized to teach or it can be organized to grow. In order to reach new people for the Lord, the Sunday School needs to have the type of organization that is required for it to grow. For example, every growth-oriented Sunday School needs an outreach director. It needs a contact program. It needs to be making weekly contacts. It needs to have a growth mind-set. In short, it needs to be organized to grow.
14. Expect the whole church to be involved in Sunday School. The churches that have a large participation in Sunday School are churches that expect the whole church to be involved in the Sunday School program. Sunday School should not be viewed as an appendage to the church program. It should be viewed as the whole church involved in outreach, Bible study, ministry, evangelism, and fellowship. Every member of the church should be expected to enroll in Sunday School.
15. Develop an up-to-date prospect file. A prospect file is a necessity for a systematically growing Sunday School. The church needs to know who potential Sunday School members are and where to reach them. A prospect file will contain basic information on each potential member. A prospect file should be maintained and updated so as to have a number of prospects at least equivalent to the Sunday School enrollment.
16. Implement a consistent weekly contact program. The Sunday School that would grow must go. We must go out into the highways and hedges to reach people for the Lord. The Sunday

School needs to organize a systematic visitation program that involves people from the classes in an attempt to reach new people. The pastor must be involved in visitation. Church leaders should be involved in visitation, calls, cards, emails, Social Media messages and other contacts.

17. Make weekly contacts. Absentees need to be contacted on a weekly basis. A church should have a systematic way of assigning people to make these contacts. In the Sunday School, the number of contacts each week should be no less than 50 percent of the total enrollment.
18. Emphasize growth in regularly scheduled workers' meetings. The growing Sunday School needs to have regularly scheduled workers' meetings. It is during this time that plans are made for growth. Strategies are devised. People are trained. Workers are encouraged and motivated. Unless growth is planned, the likelihood is that it will not happen. The regularly scheduled workers' meeting is the best place to plan for Sunday School growth.

NOTES

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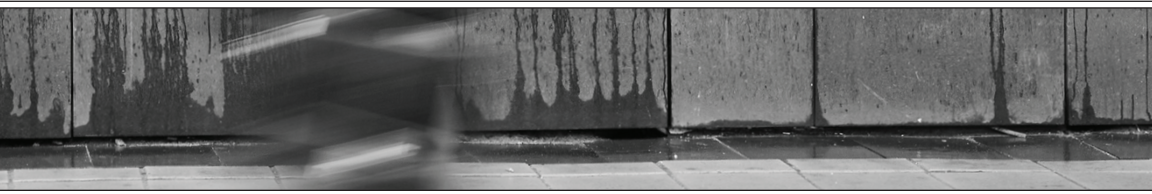


CHAPTER 2

ORGANIZING TO REACH AND TEACH



Charles Grant, Jr.



In 2009, Simon Sinek started a movement to help people become more inspired at work, and in turn inspire their colleagues and customers. Since then, millions have been touched by the power of his ideas, including more than 28 million who've watched his TED Talk on the topic, **START WITH WHY**—the third most popular TED video of all time. His book, “Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action,” is built on the premise that people aren't inspired by what you do, but what you believe. People are attracted to a belief, a cause, or purpose. We have to motivate people not from the outside in (What we do? How we do it? Why we do it?), but from the inside out (Why we do it? How we do it? And then what we do?).

He concludes his video by recalling how Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. inspired over 250,000 people to show up on a sweltering hot day in August of 1963. Sinek noted while Dr. King was an inspiring orator, the crowds didn't show up necessarily for him as much as they did for themselves. They showed up because they were attracted to and convicted about Dr. King's cause or beliefs for America. As a result, they told others about the march and together they came to be apart of Dr. King's cause.

Ultimately, Sinek makes the case that people came for themselves, because people, just like in business or any organization, don't buy what you do, they buy what you believe. Sinek concludes by commenting that if you will notice, Dr. King did not say “I Have a Plan” (what we do). He inspired others by saying, “I Have A Dream” (what he believed).

So what does Sinek's observation have to do with Sunday School? Stating a clear purpose for the Sunday School communicates why we organize the way we do. When it comes to organizing the Sunday School, **START WITH WHY!**

ORGANIZE AROUND THE PURPOSE OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

Research on growing the Black church through the Sunday School gave us a choice—a teaching oriented Sunday School or a growth oriented Sunday School. The growth oriented Sunday School emphasizes the primary tasks or purposes; to reach, teach, and minister.

In his training resource *Forward From Here*, Allan Taylor, states that the three tasks or purposes of Sunday School are taken from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ as recorded in Matthew 4:23 and 9:35:

1. To reach people is evangelism, the first part of The Great Commission.
2. To teach people is discipleship, the second part of The Great Commission.
3. To minister to people is loving your neighbor as yourself.

LifeWay defines the purpose of Sunday School as the foundational strategy for leading people to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Additionally, Sunday School helps build Great Commission Christians through open Bible study groups that invite people to discover the truths of God's Word and connect with others through fellowship and ministry. However you choose to articulate your purpose, **START WITH WHY!** To start with why the Sunday School exists gives understanding to why you will organize the way you do. Organize around the purpose of the Sunday School.

ORGANIZE AROUND THE STRATEGY OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

The strategy of the Sunday School must support its purpose. In the growth oriented Sunday School model, this strategy has been called the three dimensions of GOSS: INVITE, DISCOVER, and CONNECT. Helpful resources can be obtained by going to www.lifeway.com.

In the three dimensions of GOSS, balance is the key. Invite, Discover, and Connect are intentionally interrelated—like the three sides of a triangle (see page 32).

What would happen if a Sunday School class or small group focused primarily on inviting people to class and connecting through fellowship and ministry, but with respect to discovering, the teacher was never prepared and only lectured the entire time?

What would happen if a Sunday School class did an excellent job with discovering (teacher is prepared, uses a variety of teaching approaches, class is engaged, there's lively discussion and the teacher teaches for spiritual transformation), but with respect to inviting and connecting, it just doesn't happen?

What if a Sunday School class is great with connecting through fellowship and ministry but never invites anyone to class and the discover dimension is absent from the class? The key to having a strong GOSS Sunday School is balance.

ORGANIZE AROUND FOUR AGE GROUPS

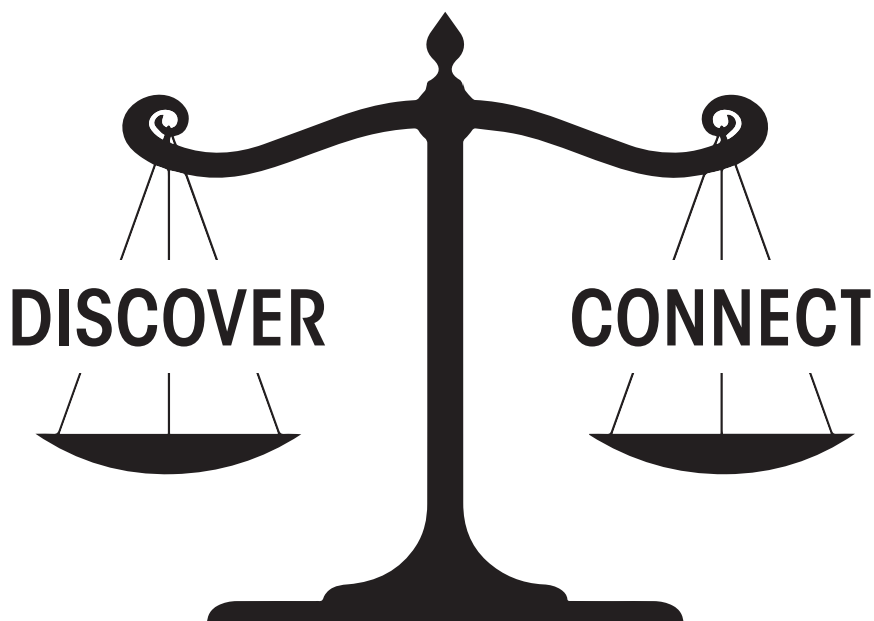
The basic organization is age graded, with public-school classification date used for children and youth. Persons are grouped together to form compatible teaching groups—that is, compatible from the standpoint of pupil needs and pupil abilities (abilities based on age, not intellect).

Any size Sunday School should have at minimum four classes, one each for preschooler, children, youth, and adults. As a Sunday School moves towards 50 in attendance, this foundation plus an additional adult class should suffice. Further breakdown by departments and classes will be provided as needed within these broad groups.

The **Preschool Department**, as the title suggests, includes all persons, who have not yet started school (first grade). Public school systems are not uniform across the Convention. Some provide kindergarten and some do not; so preschool here means pre-first grade. This seems to

THREE DIMENSIONS OF GOSS

INVITE



BALANCE is a key for building a **STRONG**
GOSS Sunday School

be a natural break for the division, since children in first grade have reached a milestone in growth and development that opens up a new world of opportunities for them.

The **Children's Department** includes all persons who are in elementary school, first grade through fifth grade. The ages included generally would be six through eleven; however, children are most likely to be compatible with those they are in school with, so preference is given to school grading for classification purposes. A church may use age, rather than grade, along with the public school classification date and achieve the same purpose. In either case, the desired end is the best possible grouping for reaching and teaching.

The **Youth Department** includes all persons in grades six through twelve. The ages generally would be twelve through eighteen. If age grading is followed, public school classification dates should be used for grouping purposes. Although older youth are approaching adulthood, they are considered to be most compatible with other high school students, as long as they are still in high school.

The **Adult Department** includes all persons beyond high school graduation, usually age eighteen and older. If a person graduates before age eighteen, however, he would, at promotion time, be included in the Adult Department. Another exception would be to include married persons in an adult class, even if they have not reached age eighteen or have not graduated from high school.

In the book *One Hundred: Charting a Course Past 100 in Sunday School* by David Frances, the organizational chart adds classes based on key growth milestones in the Sunday School from 50, 75, 100, 150, and 200 (see page 35).

The grading plan is not an end, but rather a means to an end. In the final analysis, the person is more important than the plan. Wise Sunday School leaders know, however, that the grouping and grading plan being recommended has grown out of years of experience in a variety of churches. Careful attention should be given to recommendations and exceptions made only when the best interest of the pupil seems to be at stake.

Organizing around the four age groups represents the foundation for reaching and teaching in a growth oriented Sunday School. Additionally, you can add groups according to unreached people groups in the following areas:

- Life stages—college & career, married with preschoolers, married with teenagers, empty-nesters, etc.
- Affinity groupings—medical professionals, law school students, motorcycle enthusiasts, fraternity or sorority group, newlyweds' class, new parents, etc.
- Hobbies—softball, football, arts & crafts, pool, etc.
- Neighborhoods—the area forming a community in a town or city

You may choose to combine some of these groups (example: 50's with empty nesters). Whichever group or combination of groups you choose, its target group and the overall Sunday School purpose(s) will define the mission of each class. As you organize to reach and teach the foundational age groups and unreached people groups guide the development of your classes.

ORGANIZE AROUND AN ADULT CLASS REPORTING TIME

Purpose: Make time for reporting time to ensure a growth oriented Sunday School functions 24/7.

On average, a class will have about 40 to 45 minutes actual teaching time. Oftentimes the challenge of even getting this amount of teaching time is due to a late start time. One way to motivate Sunday School workers to arrive on time is to start teaching promptly at the time designated so the last 10 to 15 minutes can be used to give class reports by adult class leaders. One of the hallmark distinctions of a growth oriented Sunday School is class leaders do the work of implementing the three dimensions of GOSS. To ensure class motivation,

50	75	100	150	200		
Preschool	Babies-Twos	Babies-Twos	Babies	Babies		
			Ones-Twos	Ones-Twos		
	Threes-Kindergarten	Threes-Kindergarten	Threes-Pre-K	Threes		
			Kindergarten	Kindergarten		
Kids	Grades 1-3	Grades 1-3	Grades 1-2	Grade 1	S P E C I A L B U D D I E S	
				Grade 2		
	Grades 4-6	Grades 4-6	Grades 3-4	Grade 3		
				Grade 4		
			Grades 5-6	Grade 5		
				Grade 6		
Students	Students	Middle School	MS Boys	7-8 Boys		
			MS Girls	7-8 Girls		
		High School	High School	HS Boys		
				HS Girls		
Adults	Adults	Young Adults	Young Adults	College/Career		
				Nearly/ Newlywed		
				Young Married		
		Adults	Special Needs	Special Needs		
			Parents	Parents		
			Empty Nesters	Empty Nesters		
Senior Adults	Senior Adult Women	Senior Adult Women	Senior Adult Women	Senior Adult Women		
				Senior Adult Women		
	Senior Adult Men	Senior Adult Men	Senior Adult Men	Senior Adult Men		
		Senior Adult Coed	Senior Adult Coed	Senior Adult Coed		

enthusiasm, accountability, and consistency, time is given towards the end of class for class leaders to give their weekly ministry reports. When the teacher makes the reporting time a conviction for organizing class time, the teaching portion will start on time. Members soon learn that in order to get a full lesson, they must be on time. Starting on time also reinforces that reaching and ministry are just as important as teaching.

The following eight class leader job descriptions for an adult class are from an out of print resource, “How To Sunday School Manuel” by Wayne Poling, LifeWay Sunday School Trainer.

Teacher—Develops an environment in which people have the opportunity to accept Christ and mature as Christians. The teacher serves as the primary class leader and enlists the ministry coordinator and apprentice. The teacher also leads class members to encounter God through group and personal Bible study. The teacher works with church leaders and the class to start new classes and send members out into service.

Apprentice—Develops skills in anticipation of serving as a teacher. The apprentice teaches once every six weeks and more often in preparation for starting a class. This leader assists the teacher in encouraging spiritual and service growth in members. Knowing the class needs, the apprentice suggests discipleship studies. The apprentice promotes and teaches these studies to meet specific needs beyond the Sunday School hour.

Ministry Coordinator—Leads the class ministry through example, delegation, and accountability. Until other class leaders are enlisted, the coordinator develops and implements evangelism, evangelism training, greeting and registering guests, record keeping, guest and prospect follow-up, class member care, and fellowships. When appropriate, the coordinator enlists the leaders below to take over these ministries.

Visitation-Evangelism Coordinator—Develops and implements a class evangelism strategy including prospect discovery, guest welcome and registration, guest follow-up, evangelism training, and the personal enlistment of members to implement these plans.

Care Group Leader(s)—Minister to four to six members and members-in-service. With other leaders they make sure every member is contacted regularly for absenteeism, crises, encouragement, and evangelism. One of the care group leaders serves as Care Group Coordinator.

Fellowship Coordinator—Encourages closer class relationships through ongoing activities and events that bring people together for fun and fellowship.

Missions Coordinator—Leads the class to support missions giving, education, and participation. Encourages and plans member involvement in church- and class-sponsored mission and ministry projects.

Prayer Coordinator—Encourages personal daily devotional and Bible study activities. Leads the class to become involved in the prayer ministry of the church and coordinates the prayer ministry of the class.

Below is a sample reporting time “role play” that facilitates the execution of adult class leaders.

CLASS REPORTING TIME “ROLE PLAY”

TEACHER/TEACHER APPRENTICE: Thank you class for the privilege of teaching today’s lesson. Thank you for your questions, comments, and especially suggestions on how to apply today’s lesson, *The Standard Maker*. At this time I want to turn things over to our Ministry Coordinator, Bro. _____ or Sis. _____.

MINISTRY COORDINATOR: Thank you Bro. _____ or Sis. _____. We were tremendously blessed as you challenged our thinking and enabled us to see the joy in applying the main truth of this lesson to the area God has shown us for this week. It’s time to hear from our various class leaders. Let’s start with the outreach/evangelism leader.

OUTREACH/EVANGELISM COORDINATOR: Let me start by thanking Bro. Jones and Sis. Stapleton for going with me this

past Saturday. We made three evangelism visits in response to the enrollment cards turned in by Sis. Kay, Bro. George, and Bro. Carr. In the first visit, David prayed to receive Christ and enrolled in Sunday School. In the second visit, Tiffany prayed to receive Christ. She went to get her husband who was working in the backyard. Bro. Jones happened to know him and started asking questions about his spiritual background. Eventually, Bro. Jones led him to pray to receive Christ. In our last visit, Alan did not have time to talk so we left a tract and told him we would return in a couple weeks. We finally made one ministry visit to Bro. Tom's house. We prayed with him and took his kids to the children's event at church. As always, we had a good time in fellowship as we witnessed and ministered during our time together. Let me encourage each of you to enroll someone this week so we can have more prospects to do evangelism. That's our report Bro. or Sis. Ministry Coordinator.

MINISTRY COORDINATOR: What an awesome report from our outreach/evangelism team. We are mandated to "go." Make sure you join the rotation to go with one of our evangelism teams. Let's hear from our care group leaders. For time sake, can we have the Care Group Leader Coordinator give one report for the other care group leaders.

CARE GROUP COORDINATOR: Let me start by thanking Bro. Julius and Sis. Carolyn. They are doing a super job with staying connected with members in our class. We had a total of 10 calls, five emails, three postcards mailed, and three visits to members in our class. Today we welcome back Bro. Carl. As you know he had a death in the family. Bro. Carl testified of the support through cards, calls, and personal visits by class members. It's good to see you today. Sis. Johnson has been out sick for a couple of weeks but she's here today. Good to see you're doing well today. That's our report.

MINISTRY COORDINATOR: It's so good to have care group teams like ours. Neither the teacher nor myself could possibly care for all the needs in this class. These teams remind us we're better when we do it together. Let's hear from the Fellowship Coordinator.

FELLOWSHIP COORDINATOR: Does everyone remember

what's happening this Friday? That's right! It's our barbeque fellowship over at the Johnson's house. We ask each of you to contribute three dollars. That will take care of the meat we'll prepare. We need those who can to sign up to bring a side dish. Remember, we'll be playing some board games, watching the game, and if some of you think you still got game, we'll play some three on three on the basketball court. Remember to invite an un-churched guest. Remind them they don't have to bring anything. They're our guests. That's our report, Ministry Coordinator.

MINISTRY COORDINATOR: If you've never had any of the Johnson's barbeque, here's your chance. It's some of the best you'll ever taste. Remember, our fellowships away from the church are special times to get to know one another better, build stronger friendships, and invite those who don't yet know our Lord. Let's make every effort to be there this Friday. Now let's hear from our Mission's Coordinator.

MISSIONS COORDINATOR: Since accepting the challenge to lead us to do one missions project a quarter, it has been a joy to see some members in our class commit to the monthly mission to the local senior citizens' home and the monthly mentorship mission effort to the boys at the local juvenile hall. Last week, the family of Jevon Levey was in worship service. He is the 14 year old that Bro. Jeff mentors at the correctional facility. Thank you Bro. Jeff for your devotion to make a difference in this family. I thank God also for the 20 persons prayed for as several of our class members went from room to room at the nursing home. That's our report Ministry Coordinator.

MINISTRY COORDINATOR: Thanks be to God for those serving in our missions. You are responding to our Lord's call to visit those in prison and care for those in distress in our community. Last, but certainly not least, let's hear from our Prayer Coordinator.

PRAYER COORDINATOR: At the beginning of class I placed a blue card on your seat. If you had time to fill it out, I will add your request to our prayer list for Bro. Steve and Sis. Karen who help me pray over this list during the week. Remember, if you want us to pray over a request beyond 30 days, please resubmit the request. Don't

forget to tell us when your prayer has been answered so we can update our list and provide praise reports. We rejoice that Bro. Kevin's request for prayer for a job was answered. Remember Bro Raymond. He is in Dallas on a temporary training assignment for his job. He emailed to say he and his wife are experiencing God's peace as they deal with being separated until he comes home. That's our report Ministry Coordinator.

MINISTRY COORDINATOR: Everyone has different spiritual gifts and talents. We could not possibly function at this level without you. Our teacher, teacher apprentice, and myself are grateful for your service. You serve the one who did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom to many. Remember to prepare for next week's lesson. Let's stand for our closing prayer (MC pulls up an empty chair). As we are led in prayer, let's all pray silently, asking God to bring a new person to the group to fill this empty chair. Teacher apprentice, would you lead us in our closing prayer?

The Point: An adult class reporting time ensures the class functions 24/7.

Occasionally I'm asked, "Do you have to enlist all the leaders in the order displayed?" The answer is no. Neither do you need to stress over getting all the class leader roles filled before you start having a reporting time. Beyond the teacher, I suggest prioritizing the enlistment of a Visitation-Evangelism Coordinator, Care Group Leader(s), and a Fellowship Coordinator first. Thereafter, seek to fill the other roles. Ultimately, fill these roles as the Lord raises up class leaders for each.

ORGANIZE AROUND NEW GROUPS

Organizing to reach and teach is part of an ongoing strategy to support the purpose of the Sunday School.

There are several reasons to start new groups.

1. Jesus made disciples in small groups (Mark 3:13-15)

2. New groups grow faster than existing groups.
3. For every new group started properly, you add approximately 10 new people to your church.
4. New groups allow you to keep the class size between 12 and 16 persons so interaction, connection, and attention to care for every class member can remain effective.
5. New small groups make room for more leaders to use their gifts for Christ.
6. LifeWay's *Transformational Groups* by Ed Stetzer and Eric Geiger contains research backed conclusions that members who participate in small groups are more likely to pray and read their Bible, confess their sins, give more generously, serve more faithfully, and share their faith proactively than members not in a small group.
7. New groups will enable your Sunday School to be strategic and relevant in reaching different unreached people groups.
8. New groups formed can offset any decline in children and youth classes due to promotion.

In *Forward From Here: Urgent Priorities for Today's Sunday School and Small Groups*, Allan Taylor points out five ways to start new groups:

1. *Birthing*—The “mother” class develops new leaders for the new class and births them with a few seed members.
2. *Trailblazing*—The current teacher of the mother class leaves with new leaders and seed members, and births the new class while the apprentice teacher assumes the leadership of the mother class.
3. *Relationally*—Birthing a new class by taking a care group from the mother class as seed members for the new class.
4. *Topically*—Start new groups around a specific subject or study.
5. *New Members*—Start new groups from your new members class.

ORGANIZE AROUND A WISE DISCIPLESHIP STRATEGY

The importance of choosing an on-going curriculum cannot be overemphasized. Going back to the purpose of the Sunday School, the selection of curriculum must match the purpose of the group. Ongoing curriculum is the best fit for a growth oriented Sunday School because lessons are designed to begin and end on the same Sunday. While lessons may be part of an entire unit, say six weeks, they aren't so connected to one another that you must have attended the previous week to know what's going on. Each lesson is complete and satisfying on its own. This is because we expect new people every week in a growth oriented Sunday School, the curriculum must match the purpose of Sunday School classes.

The Sunday School curriculum is designed to meet specific needs of class participants. It takes into account their age, development level, life needs, and preferred approach for studying the Bible.

LifeWay's ongoing curriculum:

- Is Rooted in scripture
- Points people to Jesus
- Provides practical application

However, we recognize how you get there—your unique method of study—is up to you.

SELECTING BIBLE STUDY CURRICULUM

How does your group want to study the Bible?

- Based on a cultural lens
- Book by book
- Through real-life everyday issues
- In light of the gospel of Jesus

Each LifeWay resource is designed to work on its own or together with the Kids, Student and Adult age group components within the same product family.

You can even choose to use more than one as some churches choose multiple studies and use them in different environments.

The choice is up to you!

Concerning that choice, LifeWay suggests you use the “Wise Discipleship Plan” for selecting curriculum. In other words, the church should consider the pastor’s approach to preaching and balance that approach with another Bible study approach in Sunday School. For example, if the pastor is an expository preacher, rather than do a book-by-book study, the Sunday School may consider selecting a life application curriculum approach. If the pastor leans primarily towards life application during the preaching time, the Sunday School team may want to balance that approach by studying the Bible from a theology starting point. These suggested wise discipleship strategy considerations allow for the Sunday School to experience a well rounded approach to studying God’s Word.

To accommodate churches that need flexible ongoing curriculum options, all of LifeWay’s ongoing curriculum are quarterly undated. For example, the first lesson of a unit will read “Unit 1, Session 1” as opposed to a specific date for that lesson. To learn more about LifeWay ongoing curriculum options, go to www.lifeway.com.

ORGANIZE WORKERS MEETINGS

How can you effectively organize Sunday School leadership meetings for reaching and teaching?

Sunday School leadership meetings are the key planning time for the work of classes and departments. The weekly meeting is designed to help all Sunday School leaders be more effective in all aspects of the work of the Sunday School and specifically of the work of their class or

department. The leadership meetings provide a much needed focus in a day when it is easy to overlook the need to plan, pray, and strategize together.

While the following benefits, proposed schedule, and suggestions for strengthening the Sunday School leadership meetings are shared on the premises of meeting weekly, it is important to realize that the ministry context of your church will determine whether your Sunday School can meet weekly, twice a month, once a month, or once a quarter. The key question is whether you can maximize the benefits of Sunday School leadership meetings with the frequency of meeting times you've chosen.

Regular Sunday School leadership meetings:

1. **Strengthen administration in the class or department.** Sunday morning is not the time to deal with administrative concerns that may arise, such as determining the process for receiving visitors and helping them feel welcome, receiving and completing records, space and resource needs, Sunday schedules, ordering materials, and other administrative needs. These concerns are better dealt with as a team during weekly leadership meetings.
2. **Promote stronger team spirit.** Establishing common goals, developing plans, hearing and understanding the same information, dreaming together, sharing burdens and concerns, understanding what other people in the department, class, or the other age-group departments are trying to accomplish, and praying together contribute to a team spirit.
3. **Include evaluation, leading to better work.** Leadership meetings provide a time to coordinate aspects of the work and to communicate information pertinent to other leaders.
4. **Improve coordination and communication.** Weekly leadership meetings provide a time to coordinate aspects of the work and to communicate information pertinent to other leaders.

5. **Increase involvement of members and prospects in Sunday Bible study sessions.** Leadership meetings not only focus on the content of the Bible study, but provide leaders a time to determine how the Bible will be taught. Methods can be discussed and a plan built for maximizing the involvement of members and prospects in Bible study that transforms lives.
6. **Call attention to class and department plans, enrollment and attendance goals, and reports.** A leadership meeting is a time to make leaders more conscious of the progress being made by the class or department in accomplishing the plans it has established for the work of the class or department. Attention is called to the progress toward attaining enrollment and attendance goals.

What about the content of a Sunday School leadership meeting? Sunday School leadership meetings are designed to plan the work of the department and/or class, therefore, it is very important that Sunday School leadership meetings are comprehensive and cover the entire work of the department and/or class. A brief general period with all leaders together may be desired to deal briefly with major issues regarding the Sunday School. Following that segment, the respective department directors conduct age-group department leadership meetings. In churches without departments, the focus areas become the object of class planning. Class leaders gather with the class teacher to discuss the work of the class in key focus areas.

- **General Period (5–15 mins.)** – This period can vary from 5 or 10 minutes to 15 minutes. However be careful not to take time away from the important planning of departments and/or classes. This period is a brief gathering of all Sunday School leaders led by the Sunday School director, pastor, or minister of education. The purpose of the general period is to motivate and inform leaders in areas of concern to all age groups.
- **Mission Focus (10 mins.)** – This portion of the meeting is an opportunity to relate the work of the Sunday School departments and/or classes to the mission and the ministry of the Sunday

School and the church. Information is shared concerning the church wide emphases, needs, and concerns. This is a wonderful opportunity to continually emphasize Sunday School as a strategy and how the strategy of the department and/or class relates to the strategy of the Sunday School. During this portion of the meeting discuss any administrative concerns. Also use this and other portions of the meeting to pray together. This portion of the meeting may be used to discuss the enlistment of outreach teams from the class and for praying for the teams.

- Relationships Focus (25 mins.) – This is a key time for the outreach/evangelism leader to be involved in the Sunday School leadership meeting. During this part of the meeting relationships with members and prospects are discussed, individual needs are assessed, and, as appropriate, plans are made to involve members in responding to them. Needs that might trigger a outreach visit to a member or prospect are discussed. Reports are given on the visits made by the outreach teams to prospects and members. Decisions are made regarding the needed prospect and ministry visits. This portion of the meeting provides a wonderful opportunity to lay specific plans for the Sunday School department and/or class to assimilate new members. Fellowship plans aimed at building relationship are made during this portion of the meeting.

Time should be spent praying for the needs of members and prospects and the work and ministry of the department and/or class.

- Bible Study Focus (25 mins.) – The desired work of the Sunday School department and/or class is to see lives transformed. Teaching for spiritual transformation is facilitated when leaders work together to plan the best way to bring members into a life-changing encounter with the Bible message. Bible study therefore is not seen as an independent task but is the focal point around which people are reached for Christ and becomes the foundation for engaging people in evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, and worship. Pray together for the Bible study time that will take place on Sunday morning (or at any other time).

There are key steps you can take in strengthening Sunday School leadership meetings. Whether you do not presently have them or need to strengthen the ones you currently hold, consider taking the following steps to build your Sunday School leadership meetings.

1. **Talk through your plan.** Discuss thoroughly with the Sunday School planning team the advantages of a weekly Sunday School leadership meeting.
2. **Secure the commitment of the pastor and staff.** The pastor, other church staff, Sunday School director, and the Sunday School planning team will need to demonstrate a strong support for Sunday School leadership meetings if they are going to be successful. Their support will help cause the church to establish this meeting as a priority and strengthen the concept that attendance is required as a part of the Sunday School and class leaders' responsibility.
3. **Choose a time.** The best meeting time is that which fits the needs of the church and the people who are to participate. The meeting time chosen needs to be coordinated with other church leaders. The time needs to be protected so Sunday School leaders and adult class leaders may attend without conflict.
4. **Make provisions for children.** Child care needs to be age-graded, ongoing, and self-sustaining, which means materials and leaders do not have to be secured week-by-week. Such ongoing organizations as children's music and missions are ideal ways of providing for the children during weekly leadership meetings.
5. **Train department directors and teachers to conduct leadership meetings.** Department directors and teachers are key to the success of leadership meetings. They should be given specific training in conducting the meeting.
6. **Become familiar with resources.** Resources can help leaders better understand their roles and the kinds of activities that need to be taking place in the department and/or class meetings.

7. **Publicize the value of the meeting.** The value of the leadership meeting needs to be clearly communicated before securing commitments from leaders to attend them.
8. **Prepare the people.** When beginning a leadership meeting or seeking renewed commitment to the meeting, allow sufficient time to prepare people for the change. Do not go home and announce that you will begin leadership meetings the next week. Lay a foundation by helping leaders understand the value of the meeting and by training those who will conduct the meetings.
9. **Enlist committed Sunday School leaders and adult class leaders.** During enlistment of Sunday School leaders and adult class leaders the importance of attending the weekly Sunday School leadership meetings should be stressed. Communicating this expectation clearly at enlistment prevents misunderstanding later.

ORGANIZE SPACE AND EQUIPMENT

Every teaching unit must have a place to meet. Sunday School workers should study the space available and recommend space assignments. A Sunday School can reach people for Bible study only as space is provided for them to meet.

Some small Sunday Schools meet in space that is limited or that requires considerable adapting. Those meeting in a one room building may arrange one corner of the room for preschoolers and one corner for children. Curtains or portable dividers may be used to make this space more serviceable. Youth and adults may occupy other areas of the building and may or may not need curtains or dividers to isolate them from the rest of the groups. The size of the room and its arrangements probably will determine the need for curtains or dividers.

When separate rooms are available, preschoolers are the group that most need the space. Enhancing and enlarging the preschool area is the key to growth in most churches. Yet many churches continue to hope they will grow while ignoring this key.

As the Sunday School grows and additional room is needed, some space may be made available in homes or public buildings near the church. Dual use of space on Sunday morning (two Sunday Schools) is also an option for churches that need more space and have two or more Sunday worship services.

At least annually, as the new church year approaches, Sunday School leaders should conduct a “space walk,” touring the building to see where every teaching unit meets. In this type of survey, it will be possible to point out rooms that are overcrowded and those that are underused. Such a tour may lead to the discovery of usable space that is not presently assigned to any age group—such as storage rooms, offices, and hallways.

Even the smallest Sunday School should give attention to providing proper equipment for each teaching unit. The pastor and the Sunday School director may depend upon age-group workers to recommend equipment needed in their respective classes and departments.

Budget provisions should be made for the purchase of needed equipment and supplies. All age groups, especially Preschool and Children, will need certain items on a quarterly or perhaps monthly basis, such as puzzles, books, and art supplies.

RECORD KEEPING AND PROMOTION

An article published by the Kentucky Baptist Convention (January 2014) noted several main reasons why Sunday School is declining in many churches:

- Failure to connect, contact, and care for each other and minister to one another’s needs
- Failure to connect with, care for, and invite the unreached, un-enrolled, and lost sheep
- Failure to lead participants to meet God in Bible study personally

- Failure to start new classes and to provide space and workers to care for more sheep
- Failure to promote Sunday School

There is also a lack of promotion of the Sunday School related to record keeping. Accurate record keeping is critical to Sunday School enrollment. Without records there is no accountability. Accountability reminds us that our work is important. Keeping good records allows the Sunday School to strategically address the issues of decline and the issues of growth.

Here are five tips from *How To Sunday School Manual* by Wayne Poling (2009) that can make Sunday School record keeping easy.

1. Identify the information you need to collect. A good records system includes an up-to-date member roll and prospect file. Every name in the member file and prospect file represents a person who needs a regular personal encounter with God and the ministry of a concerned Sunday School class. The member and prospect data in your records tell who people are, where they live, what their spiritual condition is, and to which group they have been assigned. Weekly individual member and class records tell who is and who is not present. Record-keeping becomes a way in which leaders have accountability for members, and members become accountable for commitments they have made to their class, church, and God.
2. Select a record system that fits your church's needs. Your record system should record pertinent personal, family, spiritual development, and Sunday School participation for every individual.
3. Gather the information you need to update your records. If your church is like many churches, you will need to obtain more information in order to be able to update your records. One of the best ways to do this may be to re-register everyone for Sunday School. This does not mean beginning again with your Sunday School enrollment, but re-registering everyone and updating

information. To do this, here are some steps you may want to follow:

- a. Select two consecutive Sundays for the process.
 - b. Orient your leaders to the process.
 - c. Ask every Sunday School teacher to have each person enrolled in his or her class fill out a new enrollment card on one of those two Sundays. Make sure that all of the information is completed on the enrollment card, including date of birth information.
 - d. Ask teachers to follow-up with those in their class or department who have not completed the re-registration.
 - e. Using the information gathered, update all of the registration information. Prepare the individual member record cards and class files. You will want to make sure that your records system has in place a way that every teacher has full access to the attendance pattern of every member and knows when they are absent and present.
4. Develop a written policy for Sunday School records. Include in the policy how new members are to be enrolled, how members may be dropped from Sunday School, and the process for handling Sunday School records on Sunday morning and other times.
 5. Plan a specific training time. Make a specific effort to educate everyone that has any form of responsibility for Sunday School.

These tips for making Sunday School record keeping easy are essential for organizing to reach and teach. A record keeping system also can help with promoting the Sunday School.

While Sunday School promotion can have the idea of school age children moving to a new class, it also represents the idea of everyone being enrolled and attending Sunday School. You need special promotions to make things special and keep Sunday School lively.

There are many ways to promote the Sunday School. Be sure to brainstorm ideas with your Sunday School team and develop a list of promotional ideas. Here are a few examples:

- Send promotional invitations home with every person attending Sunday School;
- Call the worship crowd to a time of prayer for Sunday School;
- Talk about Sunday School on your website, in your blogs, and on social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.);
- Put up a promotional bulletin board in a strategic location;
- Ask adults, youth, and children to invite a friend for a special day, like “Friend Day;”
- Develop a brochure listing your classes and information about the classes to share;
- Preach a sermon series about the importance of Sunday School, then launch new groups on the Sunday following the series;
- Have the pastor share his Sunday School testimony;
- For a full month, promote and pray for every new class;
- At the end of every worship service, invite attendees to come to the next session of Sunday School (even if it is next week);
- Host an open house with tables featuring classes, what they are studying, and fellowships/projects they have planned
- Share a brief Sunday School testimony from the pulpit
- Additionally, it is usually a good idea to have an annual Sunday School enrollment campaign. Generally, the enrollment campaign will last for an entire month. The month of September or October can be good times to have an enrollment campaign since most families are back from vacations and the school year has begun.

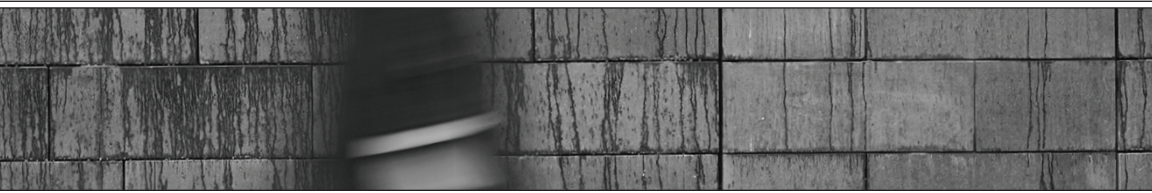
Getting Big Results in Sunday School and Black church life includes organizing around the purpose of Sunday School, the strategy of the Sunday School, the four age groups, the adult class reporting time; organizing around new groups, a wise discipleship strategy, a consistent workers meeting; organizing space and equipment, and organizing around an easy record keeping system for strategic promotions. These organizational elements can greatly impact the work of the Sunday School in reaching and teaching effectively in the Black Church.

CHAPTER 3

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL REACH AND TEACH



Michael R. Pigg



I wonder how many fewer pastors would have answered the call of caring for flocks if they had not been reached and nurtured by the Sunday School or small group Bible Study. In fact, how many fewer deacons, elders, servants, teachers, missionaries or singers would dare step forward if it had not been for the reaching and teaching ministry of the Sunday School? Clearly the ministry of small groups has played the largest role of advancing the church in her mission of making disciples.

MAKING DISCIPLES IS THE MANDATE

Jesus provided the church with a clear and intentional purpose.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

MATTHEW 28:19-20 (CSB)

The resurrected Christ gave this mandate to a group of Jewish people. He did not tell them to go and teach the Jewish culture to all people, but rather He commanded them to teach others to act and talk like Jesus. Our purpose, as the church of the resurrected Christ, is to go out into our communities and teach people how to act like Jesus. Our mandate is clear; it is focused, it is intentional. Any church desiring to be a church after the heart of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, must have a focused plan centered upon going and teaching.

The Sunday School is the largest small group in the church, therefore it is already positioned by its nature of reaching and teaching to be the greatest avenue of fulfilling the mandate to make “disciples.” If this ministry of the church is mobilized to reach its fullest potential, transformation will occur in the home, church and community.

Allen Taylor, a practitioner in leading great Sunday Schools and training many more for success stresses five foundational fundamentals for successfully achieving the mandate:

1. Enlist leaders
2. Provide quality training
3. Continue with ongoing leadership meetings
4. Open enrollment
5. Start new classes

Like Arthur Flake before him, Allen begins with the proper enlistment of leaders. Intentionally enlist persons who love Christ Jesus and love His church. The passion of Christ will always burn in the saints of God and the church should not waste the energy or set aside their commitment. This is the point where many churches drop the ball. The church's most passionate, and committed leaders must be in your Sunday School. This is the place where the "mission of the church" is most visible, the growth of the church is most viable, and the truth of God's Word is most vulnerable. Many churches have adopted a higher standard of appointing leaders for the church. These churches make it a practice that no one is selected to lead if they are not part of Sunday School or its small group discipleship ministry.

PROVIDE QUALITY TRAINING

And he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, equipping the saints for the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, growing into maturity with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit.

EPHESIANS 4:11-14 (CSB)

Quality training for leaders is a direct overflow of the ministry of the church. The gifting of the church is for the distinguished privilege

of “equipping the saints for the work of ministry” as the Ephesians passage speaks. No soldier is ever sent to the battlefield without going through boot camp and advanced training. Likewise, the corporate world would never hire a manager or director and not adequately train him or her for success. Quality training is essential for the church to grow.

Training should cover Sunday School essentials. Other chapters discuss teaching in age graded groups. This chapter will emphasize the need to train teachers for growth through outreach and enlistment. When I discover a great restaurant I am always asked what made it great. Most answers include the following: atmosphere, menu, quality of food, and service. When these four things score high in my mind the result is, “I have found a great place to eat!” The result has always been for me to tell other persons about my new discovery. As if I am saying, “you will enjoy it likewise.”

Good training should include the excitement of finding newness in Christ Jesus. It is easy to share something you love with friends, associates and neighbors. Talk about the atmosphere of your church and classes and how everyone finds personal connections. Share the menu with potential enrollees about your church’s approach to small group curriculums and strategies of engagement. Talk about the quality of the meal when people are able to identify real personal life issues that the Scriptures have addressed.

In my illustration of the restaurant you should note that service was last. Do not confuse that it is last as in least. If the service in the restaurant was poor, it would not matter if the quality of the food was the best in world. If the service was bad, the perceived pleasant atmosphere would turn into a turbulent storm. Everything hinges on service. Train your leaders on methods of caring, praying, and follow up. These things elevate the sincerity of your service to others in the Sunday School and life in general.

TRAINING SHOULD BE ONGOING

Every year, a good quality organization will always plan to implement three things with its leadership. First they will provide a time and place for retreat and review of methods and strategies. This is needed for retooling of a person's giftedness and learning newer ways of implementation. No one knows it all. We depend heavily on the grace of God and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to achieve standards of excellence in service. When we place ourselves in teachable positions, we have the best of both worlds—good training and the power of God.

The second thing is consistent evaluation. Leadership should have goals and tasks that can be measured for desirable outcomes. Everyone needs some type of feedback for an ongoing yet developing work. Every good leadership team will have a scorecard for success.

At the end of the baseball game, it is the scorebook that really tells us about the game. Many people only look at the scoreboard to tell who won and whether or not their team came out on top. Real winning is not only found on the scoreboard, it is found in the scorebook. The scorebook records the details of the game. How many hits, strikeouts, runs batted in, sacrifices, errors, put-outs and homeruns occurred during the game? These are the facts that dictate the progress of a team who has a common goal to improve their play on the field.

A scorebook should always be maintained for accurate progress and growth. How many new enlistments? How many missing participants in your class? How many contacts or follow ups made this week? Have you met your personal goals this week in lesson preparation? Have class caregivers met expectations this week? Your scorebook should be personalized according to your goals and tasks. What are my weekly obligations? What quarterly milestones should be reached to continue success? How often and in what ways do I meet with my team?

The third thing that good organizations do is provide training opportunities outside your normal environment. This could be a state convention organized training, special conferences lead by LifeWay discipleship specialists, or a local association growth conference. This

is a time of thinking and learning “outside the box.” You may discover ways to improve making new contacts, or enlisting resident membership into small groups. New ideas provide fresh energy and may serve as a confidence booster.

OPEN ENROLLMENT

Open enrollment means that anyone can join at anytime. I know your first thought is that we already do that. Most churches have the semblance of being open, but are more closed in practice. Many of our traditional Sunday Schools in our adult section have been intact together so long that if anyone walks into the class the air would be filled like the stranger walking off the dusty streets of an old west movie—through the swinging doors of a bar. The music stops and all eyes are fixed on the door.

Open enrollment is more than a phrase; it is a mode of thinking. The Sunday School is the one place you can “Belong before you Believe!” If all our classes have the thick atmosphere of a miniature seminary class, it will always be closed to the public. Open enrollment provides a posture of welcoming new persons into a family of God who learn, care, pray, and fellowship together. Remember, when a person joins a Bible study class they are more likely to become a member who will support the church spiritually, physically, and financially.

STARTING NEW CLASSES

Another proven method of growing your Sunday School and reaching new persons is by starting new classes. A growth oriented Sunday School should have as one of its major goals to start new classes every year. People for some reason are attracted to “New”. The word new has a magnetism of attention. People are attentive when they hear words like new dress, new tie, new job, new pastor and new class starting.

Starting new classes increases your leadership base of persons who are trained in teaching, reaching, praying and caring. Many churches plateau or become stagnate because of a poorly developed disciple strategy. Plans for starting new classes help a church with fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) and remain a thriving healthy church for years to come.

A Sunday School who shares in the style of being open and plans to start new classes will need high expectations. Let's look briefly at what a class would function like if you expect new people every week.

If you expect new people every week, your class will:

1. Make sure the room is set up with newcomers in mind
2. Use nametags consistently
3. Assure personal study guides are available for guests
4. Present every lesson with a complete and satisfying experience for all participants
5. Make prayer a major component
6. Be prompt in attendance and never let a guest arrive to an empty classroom
7. Engage all guest in meaningful conversation
8. Introduce the guest to other people in the class
9. Sit with the guest in class and in the worship service
10. Invite the guest to lunch
11. Contact the guest and thank them for visiting the class
12. Invite them to return, and to attend the next fellowship

BEYOND THE WORSHIP EXPERIENCE

It is a visual fact that most churches specialize in making the worship experience spiritually fulfilling. Our worship services do minister to the participants and seem to be a desirable drawing card. However, according to LifeWay Research in the book *High Expectations*, only 16% of persons whose primary point of contact with the church was through a worship service were still active in the church after 5 years. This statistic is not good for making long-term disciples. Furthermore the same research reveals that 83% of persons whose primary point of contact with the church was through the Sunday School were still active after 5 years. The primary way to retain worshippers is teaching them the Word of God and sharing in the struggles and successes in small groups.

It is impossible for the pastor and primary leaders of a congregation to provide the proper care giving that every individual needs. It can only be provided in a smaller organized environment. The Sunday School is that perfect environment. Enroll persons from the congregation in your Sunday School. Many potential new classes exist in the congregation already.

Who lives near your church? Who worships in your church? These two questions should be the ignition to start new classes. Start classes according to affinity groups that presently exist. Some Affinity Groupings—medical professionals, law school students, motorcycle enthusiasts, fraternity or sorority group, newlyweds, widows or widowers, new parents, college, singles etc. Start classes according to hobbies or lifestyles. Some examples are college & career, married with preschoolers, married with teenagers, empty-nesters, softball, football, arts & craft, hikers, cyclist, bikers, book clubs, etc. Retain your church membership by enrolling them in new transformation classes.

BUILD A WINNING TEAM THAT EXECUTES WINNING WAYS

Every church that has existed for any length of time knows about Sunday School. But not every church has a winning Sunday School. Execution determines the outcome. The church will need to be intentional in every aspect of reaching and teaching. The church must annually enlist and train teachers who will prepare, present and be persistent with every lesson. The church must annually evaluate the quality of every class and examine the care givers effectiveness.

Execution means that every class and administrative leader will evaluate the Scorebook to accomplish the major task of Sunday School. Good teaching is a required for high marks in the scorebook. A teacher should use a curriculum that is biblically sound in doctrine and current in application. A teacher must prepare his or her lesson with help from a leader guide, commentary, and other sources that will equip the teacher for success. A teacher or designee must prepare the classroom for the arrival of participants. A teacher also must deliver the lesson while including open discussion that will lead to real-time life and living application.

Execution will position the ministry in the best place for the most preferred outcome, which is transformation. A Sunday School that reaches and teaches will resemble those first disciples of Jesus and literally change communities one person at a time. That is our Lord's placement of our ministries according to Romans 12:1-2.

*Therefore, brothers and sisters, in view of the mercies
of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living
sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your true worship.
Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed
by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern
what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God.*

ROMANS 12:1-2 (CSB)

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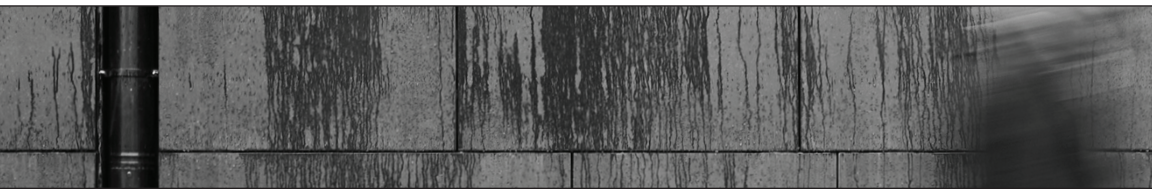


CHAPTER 4

THE PASTOR, AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE LEADERSHIP TEAM



Dennis Mitchell



A Pastor-Led Sunday School Ministry Worth Noting

Since 1986, the Greenforest Community Baptist Church (GCBC), Decatur, Georgia has been widely recognized for its Sunday School ministry which has consistently ranked among the top Black Sunday School's in America based on its effectiveness in reaching people, growing Sunday School enrollment, maintaining a high average weekly attendance, making disciples and involving members in the work of ministry.

The stability and sustainability of the GCBC Sunday School ministry over the past 30 years, cannot and should not be ignored—particularly in light of tsunami-like changes reshaping the landscape of America. While once trendy fashion fads (mini-skirts; Member's Only jackets) have lost their appeal; and entertainment devices once deemed cutting edge (Sony Walkman; VHS Recorders) have disappeared from store shelves and even as once highly regarded church growth methods and models (Bus Ministry and Door to Door Visitation) have come and gone, 30 years and two pastors later, the Greenforest Sunday School ministry continues to be the engine driving the spiritual and numerical growth of the church.

The success the GCBC Sunday School ministry has inspired pastors across the nation to place a greater emphasis on using the Sunday School as the primary platform for engaging church members in carrying out the Great Commission. Given its long term effectiveness in Sunday School work, one might ask:

- What has sustained the GCBC Sunday School ministry for over 30 years? And why is it still effective more than a decade after the death of its chief architect and promoter, the late Dr. George O. McCalep?
- What insights can pastors and churches gain from the GCBC Sunday School ministry that can be applied in strengthening and growing their Sunday School ministries?

While far from being a perfect ministry example, two critical insights can be gained from the GCBC Sunday School ministry. I give these from my perspective as a former National Sunday School and Church Growth Consultant; a former church planter-pastor in Alabama; and one that has served GCBC as a Sunday School teacher, executive pastor and later as senior pastor. The two critical insights are:

1. The value and benefit(s) of identifying, communicating and adhering to biblically-based principles in building, growing and sustaining an effective Sunday School ministry
2. The correlation between pastoral leadership in the Sunday School ministry and the spiritual health and growth of the church

Note: The insights shared from the GCBC Sunday School example includes lessons learned as a result of adhering to, as well as not adhering to, basic principles of Sunday School work.

Biblical Principles

*There is a way that seems right to a person,
but its end is the way to death.*

PROVERBS 16:25 (CSB)

Methods versus Principles. While there's a time, place and context for different methods and approaches for doing ministry, methods—like fashions and fads, are often unsustainable and lose their effectiveness over time. Dr. Elmer Towns, a noted church growth and Sunday School leader, in making the distinction between methods and principles, points out that principles are eternal and are found in Scripture, whereas methods are adaptations of eternal principles to culture and context. Says Dr. Towns, “I use the phrase anointed methods—meaning that God has methods that He uses to reach particular people in certain cultural conditions. As conditions change and the people change, certain methods lose their effectiveness.” Biblically based principles, on the other hand are different from methods in that they are timeless, relevant and thus applicable for all ministry situations.

Over the years, many books, articles, workshops and conferences have promoted various methods for growing churches and building effective Sunday School ministries, and while many are good and have value, when it comes to building and maintaining a healthy Sunday School ministry, there are nine biblically-based principles that must be adhered to.¹

1. A vision and commitment to Sunday School growth
2. Identifying and enrolling Sunday School prospects
3. Starting new Sunday School classes and departments
4. Enlisting new Sunday School workers
5. Equipping all Sunday School workers
6. Providing space & resources for the Sunday School ministry
7. Conducting weekly Sunday School worker planning meetings
8. Engaging (absent) members and prospects weekly
9. Effectively teaching the Bible for application and transformation.²

Knowing and adhering to the above principles has been a major contributing factor to the long-term effectiveness of the GCBC Sunday School ministry.

Pastoral Leadership

I will give you shepherds who are loyal to me, and they will shepherd you with knowledge and skill.

JEREMIAH 3:15 (CSB)

The second insight and critical factor in strengthening and growing a healthy Sunday School is pastoral leadership. The role and impact the pastor has on the work and ministry of the Sunday School can't be

over stated. As God's chosen, appointed and anointed leader, in order for the church to systematically and effectively carry out its God given mission to reach, teach, baptize and make disciples, the Sunday School must grow and the pastor is the one who must provide leadership for that growth.

Based on the experience of GCBC and other churches with healthy, growing Sunday Schools, the Sunday School ministry is most effective when the senior pastor is:

I. Personally committed to Sunday School.

- A. The pastor's personal commitment to Sunday School growth must be driven by a biblical conviction that the *miseo-dei* (mission of God) is to seek and to save that which was lost. The pastor must be further driven by conviction that God has assigned the church responsibility for making Him known in a lost and dying world.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the one who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

1 PETER 2:9 (CSB)

The Lord does not delay his promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.

2 PETER 3:9 (CSB)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

ACTS 1:8 (CSB)

- B. The pastor's personal commitment to Sunday School growth must be rooted in the belief that the Sunday School can grow because the mission and work of the Sunday School grows out of the Great Commission with its first task being to reach people. If the pastor does not believe the priority task of the church is to reach people for Christ, the Sunday School will not grow.
- C. The pastor's personal commitment to Sunday School must be reflected in his commitment to lead ministry leaders and the congregation to give priority emphasis on the Great Commission in the church budget and on the church calendar. A church's budget and calendar are the greatest testimony to its priorities!
- D. The pastor's personal commitment to Sunday School must be demonstrated by his commitment to lead the church in developing, implementing and maintaining a Sunday School organizational structure conducive to numeral growth and the spiritual growth of Sunday School participants.
- E. The pastor's personal commitment to Sunday School is communicated best through his presence and participation in the Sunday School ministry.
- F. The pastor's personal commitment to Sunday School must be grounded in the belief that a well organized and led Sunday School is the best platform for engaging the entire church in carrying out the Great Commission. The pastor must believe and lead others to view the Sunday School not as an auxiliary of the church, but rather Sunday School is "The Church" organized to carry out the Great Commission.

GCBC Examples

The catalyst for the organizing and development of the GCBC Sunday School ministry was the leadership of Dr. George O. McCalep. Following his death, the Rev. Dennis Mitchell assumed the mantle of leadership of GCBC and led the church to continue its priority emphasis on Sunday School. He regularly called the church to

“Stand firm on the Word and to stay focused on the mission.”

Both Pastor McCalep and Pastor Mitchell demonstrated a personal commitment to utilizing the Sunday School to carry out the Great Commission of reaching, teaching, baptizing, discipling and ministering to people. Even the current pastor of GCBC, Dr. Emory Berry, Jr. is committed to giving priority emphasis to the Sunday School ministry.

“Fulfillment Hour” classes and Sunday School teachers are referred to as shepherds. Both of these designations are very significant in the work and ministry of the GCBC Sunday School ministry.

The Fulfillment Hour class designation reflects the philosophy that the Sunday School class is not simply the place where the Bible is taught. Rather, the Sunday School class is the one organization in the entire church where all the purposes of the church—except corporate worship, can be fulfilled. While the church has ministry team leaders tasked with coordinating evangelism, discipleship, ministry, missions and fellowship, using a ministry matrix, the primary implementation of these church functions is driven through the Sunday School. Each Fulfillment Hour (FH) class has a leader representing each of the five purposes of the church. These leaders are tasked with leading members of their respective FH class to engage in activities related to that ministry.

The FH Class Fellowship Leader leads the class in planning and participating in various fellowship related events designed to strengthen relationships among class members. Likewise, the FH Class Ministry Leader, leads the class in participating in either church-wide or class specific ministry related activities. An illustration of the powerful impact of this concept occurred several years ago when a member of the congregation lost the contents of his home to a flood. The Church Ministry Team Leader, working with FH Class Ministry Leaders in each of the 70 FH classes, developed a needs list that was circulated through the Sunday School organization. As a result, virtually all the lost household items were replaced through contributions

made by FH classes. Not only was the receiving family blessed, but the entire church through its FH Sunday School ministry, was impacted by the sense of having engaged in a ministry of significance. There's an old axiom which says people don't care what you know until they know that you care. The GCBC FH ministry provides a great opportunity to demonstrate care and concern for others.

The FH Shepherd designation is symbolic of GCBC's philosophy that the FH class is more of a ministry center than just a teaching station. Each FH class leader is selected based on their spiritual giftedness and demonstrated shepherd's heart.

A healthy, growing Sunday School ministry is most effective when the senior pastor:

II. Provides the vision for the need and urgency of Sunday School.

Without revelation people run wild, but one who follows divine instruction will be happy.

PROVERBS 29:18 (CSB)

One of the ways the pastor provides visionary leadership for the Sunday School is by helping church leaders and members see how the work and ministry of Sunday School relates to the Great Commission.

In "Basic Sunday School Work," Dr. Harry Piland stated "because of the nature and mission of the church revealed in the Scriptures, and because of the centrality of the Bible in Sunday School, the Sunday School is at the heart of the mission of the church". Dr. Piland continues by stating, "the tasks (work of) the Sunday School comes directly from the mission of the church and includes the tasks of reaching people and involving them in Bible study; witnessing and winning persons to Christ and involving them in a ministry of loving, caring and growing."³

Given that the church is called and commissioned to go (reach), teach,

baptize and make disciples; and given that the Sunday School uses the Bible as its textbook 52 Sundays a year; and given that the Sunday School has the largest membership and number of workers than any other church ministry and is structured for outreach, witnessing, Bible study and ministering to the needs of individuals of all ages, the Sunday School is the ideal and best platform for a church to carry out the Great Commission.

The pastor's ability to cast a vision that links the work and ministry of the Sunday School to the Great Commission and the vision and mission of the church he pastors, is essential to helping leaders and members gain better understanding of what and why the Sunday School ministry is integral to:

- the church carrying out its mission and ministry mandate to go, reach, teach, baptize, disciple, and observe
- the spiritual health of the church as it acts in faith and obedience to God's Word
- the numerical growth of the church as it ministers to people through the Word, Spirit and Deeds

The vision and mission of the GCBC Sunday School ministry parallels the vision and mission of the church, which flows out of the Great Commission.

GCBC Vision:

To build a biblical community of loving relationships whose members daily and devoutly love, follow and model Christ.

GCBC Mission:

Find Them (the lost), Bring Them In (invite them to church), Grow Them Up (disciple through Sunday School) and Send Them Out (engaging them in ministry utilizing their spiritual gifts).

The stability and sustainability of the GCBC Sunday School ministry over the years has been undergirded by the senior pastor keeping before the leaders and members these three embedded principles:

1. LOVE: The GCBC Sunday School vision is driven by love for God and love for people.

He said to him, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands."

MATTHEW 22:37-40 (CSB)

2. COMMISSION: The GCBC Sunday School mission is driven by the Great Commission.

Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

MATTHEW 28:19-20 (CSB)

3. OBEDIENCE: The work of the GCBC Sunday School ministry is driven by the desire to obey God.

"If you love me, you will keep my commands.

JOHN 14:15 (CSB)

The GCBC pastor's constant reference to these three foundational principles linked to the Great Commission and the vision and mission of the church through his preaching and teaching, have shaped, guided, driven and sustained the GCBC Sunday School ministry through cultural, community demographic and church leadership changes.

A healthy, growing Sunday School ministry is most effective when the senior pastor:

III. Sets the strategic direction for the Sunday School.

One of the most critical and time consuming tasks the pastor has in working with the Sunday School is (his) setting the strategic direction and providing ongoing oversight.

The Greek word for strategy, *stratēgia*, is derived from two words: “stratos” meaning army and “ago” which is the ancient Greek word for leading, guiding, moving.

In its military sense, the term refers to the plans of a general who has set up camp on a hill overlooking the battlefield. The general, having a vantage point that enables him to see the big picture, is able to move his military assets (people and resources) around in order to better position his troops to secure the victory.

It is often said that the church is engaged in a battle. It’s the greatest battle ever fought. It’s a battle for the hearts and minds of people. Perhaps a well organized, growth oriented Sunday School ministry is the church’s most potent weapon for waging spiritual warfare in such a battle.

In the book, *The Church Growth Handbook*, author William Easom points out that transformed, dynamic churches engage in strategic planning led by a general (the senior pastor) and accompanied by an army (the ministry team).⁴

Moses was chosen, appointed and anointed by God to lead the people of God to pursue the “way of the Lord” out of the wilderness and follow the vision of God. So too has every church been given a pastor after God’s own heart; a pastor who is to lead the church with knowledge and wisdom; a pastor who through prayer and meditation on the Word, receives the spiritual insight to see the big picture; the wisdom to identify options along with the courage and faith to make strategic decisions necessary to win the battle.

Although the pastor is the chief strategist, like Moses, this is not a burden he must bear alone. Every pastor needs an Aaron, a strong right hand person to serve alongside of him to provide day-to-day leadership of the Sunday School work. Additionally, the pastor needs a Sunday School ministry leadership team made up of faithful servants possessing spiritual gifts and skills that should include:

- strategic thinking (Nehemiah)
- faith (Joshua)
- planning/administration (Moses)
- encouragement (Barnabas)
- prayer (Daniel)
- perseverance (Paul)
- training (Priscilla)

This team of leaders often referred to as the Sunday School Council, Sunday School Administrative Leadership Team and the like, assists the pastor in developing the strategic direction for the Sunday School.

Strategy is because the resources available to achieve these goals and objectives are usually limited. The task of setting strategic direction involves the pastor giving leadership to an ongoing process for assessing, planning, promoting, evaluating and celebrating the work of Sunday School.

An insight into the pastor's role in setting strategic direction for the Sunday School ministry can best be illustrated by reviewing how GCBC engages in its pastor-led strategic direction setting process.

STEP 1: *Assess the Situation.* Before the annual goal setting process begins, the pastor meets with the education ministry team leader to assess the work of the Sunday School ministry. During this meeting, the pastor and the education ministry team leader discuss the status of the work of the Sunday School in terms of what is working well and what is not working well.

A simple and useful tool for assessing the work of the ministry is known as a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. The process involves performing an objective assessment of the overall Sunday School ministry by identifying and prioritizing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities (for growth and improvement) and threats (consequences if corrective action is not taken) of the ministry. Completion of the assessment process leads to the next step in setting the ministry direction.

STEP 2: *Plan and Set Goals.* The pastor leads the Sunday School leadership team in planning the work of the Sunday School primarily through setting annual Sunday School ministry goals and objectives.

Sunday School growth goals typically include:

- Increasing Sunday School enrollment
- Increasing average Sunday School attendance
- Starting new Sunday School classes
- Enlistment and training (new and existing) Sunday School workers

Sunday School objectives are action plans typically related to:

- Identifying and enrolling Sunday School prospects
- Enlisting new Sunday School workers
- Equipping all Sunday School workers
- Engaging absent FH class members
- Following up on Sunday School prospects
- Promoting the work of Sunday School
- Plans for addressing weaknesses, opportunities and threats revealed in the assessment process

Once annual Sunday School goals and objectives are finalized and budgeted, the goals and objectives are communicated to the congregation.

STEP 3: *Evaluate.* Another important role the pastor plays in setting the strategic direction and providing oversight of the Sunday School ministry is that of evaluator. Strategic planning is incomplete without a process for regular and objective evaluation of the progress of the Sunday School ministry relative to set goals and objectives.

At GCBC, the pastor meets with the education ministry team leader once a month, or as often as needed to evaluate the progress of the Sunday School. In addition to the monthly meeting, the pastor conducts quarterly and annual formal progress reviews of the Sunday School.

- The GCBC Sunday School evaluation process focuses on answering questions related to:
- The personal and spiritual wellness of the education ministry team leader, which is “priority #1” in an organization that prioritizes people
- Observations or concerns about Sunday School workers and team member’s health, performance, etc.
- How well the Sunday School is performing with respect to set goals and objectives, and what, if any, adjustments or steps are needed to achieve set goals and objectives
- Identifying administrative challenges or problems that need attention
- Actual ministry taking place in the class (Example: Are the shepherds and students reaching out to other class members? Prospects and new class members?)
- The effectiveness of FH shepherds. For example, is the quality of the Bible study facilitation acceptable? A poor Bible study experience will be reflected in the attendance. Are shepherds staying on task by leading an interactive Bible study experience based on the authorized lesson that engages members and concludes with practical life application principles? The pastor must also be alert to Sunday School classes becoming lecture halls, with no real interaction or student participation, or even worse, a mini-preaching station.

In addition to evaluating progress of the Sunday School ministry, the pastor and education ministry team leader meet regularly to review and discuss opportunities for coordinating upcoming church events and Sunday School lessons and themes with the pastor's preaching focus and emphasis. The integration of church events with Sunday School lessons and the pastor's preaching and teaching focus is a powerful way to move the church forward in a highly coordinated purpose driven way.

STEP 4: Accountability. One additional component of the pastor-led evaluation process is accountability. Although holding "volunteers" accountable is difficult, the benefits of doing so outweigh the challenge.

A spiritually healthy Church and Sunday School is one that holds its leaders accountable for their individual spirituality and the goals they have set for their respective ministries. When the pastor and the ministry leaders allow themselves to be held accountable to the congregation, holding Sunday School and other ministry leaders accountable becomes easier to do.

At GCBC, all ministry leaders (deacons, trustees, Sunday School workers, etc.) are required to complete a leadership covenant form each year. The Sunday School leader's covenant includes expectations relative to preparation for teaching (promptness; attendance at worker preparation meetings); stewardship/ tithing and participation in Sunday School training events and support for all church-wide events.

A healthy, growing Sunday School ministry is most effective when the senior pastor:

IV. Promotes Sunday School

For the Sunday School to grow, the pastor must be visible and maintain a high profile among the entire Sunday School organization as well as the congregation. In the Black church, it is a well known fact that for most members, the priorities of the church are those matters that the pastor personally emphasizes from the pulpit and through his presence.

At GCBC, the pastor historically has been seen as the face of the Sunday School and its lead promoter and chief advocate. In addition to rounding up and directing parking lot loiterers to a nearby class, the pastor regularly sticks his head in the door of Sunday School classes each Sunday as a way of affirming and encouraging both teachers and class members. His presence or absence during the Weekly Workers Meeting has a significant impact on the attendance and morale of the Sunday School Workers.

Sunday School enrollment and promotional initiatives at GCBC include:

- Using church-wide ministry events (Examples: include Valentines Day banquet; October Fest; recreational activities; Family & Friends Day; Blood Drives, etc.) as opportunities to share Christ and enroll people in Sunday School
- Enrolling every new member in a Sunday School class
- A new member orientation session that includes the vision, mission and priority emphasis of the church and the expectation for all members to participate in Sunday School and to invite others to Sunday School
- Conducting quarterly High Attendance Days
- A festive Sunday School Rally and Parade of FH classes during the first night of the annual revival
- The use of media for keeping the congregation updated on the work, ministry and progress of the FH classes

While members of the Sunday ministry are actively involved in promoting the work of the Sunday School, the pastor is the most effective tool for promotion—without question.

A healthy, growing Sunday School ministry is most effective when the senior pastor:

V. Leads in the Celebration

Faithfulness and obedience to God will always provide opportunities for celebration. A final important role the pastor plays in strengthening and growing the Sunday School ministry is leading the church in identifying, focusing on and celebrating Sunday School successes and achievements. While there will always be setbacks and disappointments—goals, objectives and budgets that are not met—the pastor must lead the people of God to remember that because of the Lord’s mercies, we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning. And because of the Lord’s mercies, as the people of God, we must always look for the activity of God in the midst of it all. For as Jesus reminds us in John 5:17, our heavenly Father is always at work.

At GCBC, in addition to all his other Sunday School leadership responsibilities, the pastor has historically been the chief Sunday School celebrant—leading the church in celebrating what God has done and is doing by regularly announcing achievements such as: the number of people that received Christ during a Sunday School-led bi-monthly evangelism blitz; during a worship service presenting certificates to those who have completed Sunday School or potential leaders training; sharing from the pulpit significant achievements of individual Sunday School classes. One of the major Sunday School celebrations the pastor is intimately involved in is the Annual Sunday School Awards and Recognition Banquet. This is an event where the church recognizes and celebrates the work and dedication of all the Sunday School workers and leaders. The event is highlighted by the crowning of a Sunday School Banquet King and Queen; Age Group Shepherds (Teachers) of the Year; the GCBC FH Shepherd of the Year (all selected by the pastor and the Sunday School leadership team).

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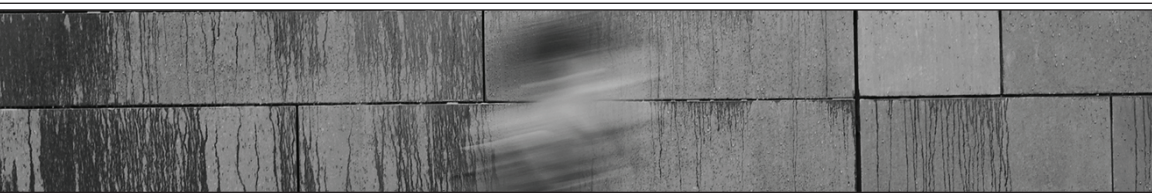


CHAPTER 5

TEACHING PRESCHOOLERS



Brenda M. Croston



A PURPOSE-FILLED PRESCHOOL SETTING

According to recent research, disciples are made and maintained in small group settings not unlike a Sunday morning Bible class. One of the main purposes of this book is to offer guidance in garnering “big results” from the Sunday School hour. Specifically, the goal is to increase awareness of the invaluable contribution Sunday School can offer Black Church Life in their efforts to make disciples and to grow churches. If the research is correct, and there is no reason to believe otherwise, the church should direct its focus toward the preschool setting. In theory, improving practices in this area may be the catalyst to growing spiritually healthy Christians who remain among the church’s membership for a lifetime.

To arrive at such a conclusion, one should consider what typically happens among preschoolers in the Sunday School environment:

- Caring physical touches are both given and received such as: the wiped tears of newcomers, caring hugs shared among little friends, and congratulatory high-fives given for achievements.
- Children are introduced to their first “church” friends, often forming lifelong bonds.
- Attendees are introduced to God and His word through meaningful play.
- Next, review the following facts while contemplating how it correlates to the above information.
- 85% of a human being’s brain is developed during the preschool years.
- Bonding endorphins (feel-good hormones) are released by human touch.
- Most decisions for Christ are made before age twelve.

To better understand how a purposefully planned preschool setting can be the key to disciple making, marry the environmental happenings to the facts. If personal connections happen in the preschool setting, along with God and His Word being introduced during the time in which the foundation for all the child will think and know is being laid, it stands to reason that the preschool setting could serve as both a salvation springboard and a spiritual boom-a-rang. Think about it. While these little ones bond over catchy tunes and biblically-sound play, synapses are taking place in their brains. The brain literally receives all that happens and stores it as foundational truths.

And, what about those feel-good hormones; how do they play into this theory? The human body is designed to physically and mentally respond to meaningful touch, by releasing a chemical that gives the body a soothing sensation, making it the optimal time for bonding. That means when this environment is filled with caring touches, friendship connections, and the gospel, they all are stored in the brains as norms and are forever associated with the “feel-goods” that accompanied those experiences. Thus, the ideal salvation foundation has been laid giving the church the responsibility to build upon it as the child moves from one age group to the next. It is no wonder why, when polled, Christians testify to having received Christ at an early age. It is because those individuals were introduced to Biblical truths during the preschool stage, the most mentally influential time of their lives.

Furthermore, Christian parents are more likely to remain faithful to the church that fosters a nurturing Christ-centered atmosphere for their young child. And, it is even more likely, those former preschoolers will forever be a part of the membership that so effectively introduced them to Christ and their first friends. Like, say, a college graduate returning to the place of his/her spiritual origin to ensure his/her children receives the same solid foundation he/she received as a child, or to partake in the religious education of the newest generation of preschoolers. This is all because those things are forever entrenched in their beings as foundational truths.

It would be incorrect to say that Black Church life is or has been ignorant to the benefits of age-appropriated Sunday School classes. A more apt assumption is that the information has not been properly utilized. Over the years, in many places, teachers made their living as professional educators, and were tapped to utilize their classroom expertise in the church life.

Sister McRae, of the Family Baptist Church in a small town in Virginia, was a lifelong educator and Sunday School teacher. The pastor tasked her with teaching the Children's class. The problem was the children weren't really children. The class, housed in the church's tiny choir stand, contained toddlers, preschoolers, adolescents, and any other non-adult group. Despite that, Sister McRae's Sunday School class was well-mannered and sat quietly week after week as she talked about the Bible lesson for the day. Sister McRae never incorporated any of her knowledge of human growth and development into the spiritual setting. Somehow, only the managing of the children made it into that environment.

That was thirty years ago, but unfortunately this is still prevalent in some current-day churches. Perhaps, not to that extent, but too many churches have not given the proper attention to the most influential and vital of the Sunday School classes, the preschoolers. They are still regulated to a quick Bible story, a snack, and coloring sheet without any real thought on how to tap into the natural human growth occurrences that could surely strengthen their spiritual lives.

Now, more than ever, it is important to investigate what is known about human growth and development and use that information as the soul-winning, disciple-making tool that it can be. In a time where "spiritual" journeys are taking the place of a solid relationship with Jesus Christ, teens are losing interest in church attendance, and young adults are almost completely absent from the church, being purposefully intentional in introducing God and His Son in the early years is a must! Gone are the times of believing preschoolers are too young to understand the principles of the faith. If that were true, the push for secular education to start by age three would be non-existent.

Taking a close look at the research concerning the importance of reaching a child before age twelve supports the idea of shifting that belief from preschoolers being too young to teens being too old. Yes, it is the teens who have the deficit! They are too old, too full of superhero lore, and too full of video game logic; they simply have too much cynicism entrenched in their minds to readily accept a story about a baby born of a virgin coming to save all mankind.

All the above, begs the question of how. How can Black Church Life tap into the power of the preschool class and empower it to reach its full potential of being a primary disciple maker and Church growth tool?

The answer is really quite simple. By reviewing and revamping three key areas, the preschool setting can set the stage for spiritual growth and maturity in all the generations to come.

THE TEACHER

Big results come from having a preschool teacher who is:

- Called by God
- Properly Trained
- Decidedly Caring
- Diligent
- Deliberately Disciplined

Finding a skilled preschool teacher who has been called to the task may seem impossible, especially when the membership of an average church is only around 200. The pickings are slim, to say the least! Taking the time to find an individual who is gifted to do the job, could mean the difference in how well students and the ministry, as a whole, flourishes.

Self-introspection and prayer are the first determining factors of whether one is called to the teaching ministry. However, a tangible resource for confirmation is needed as well, such as a Spiritual Gifts Inventory. The inventory will aid in determining whether a teaching candidate possesses the innate abilities to carry out the assignment. That means the church does not have the burden of finding a teacher, but the duty of aiding its members in discovering their gifts.

Once a teacher has been chosen and approved for the task, adequate training is needed. This is one of the areas that is often left lacking. In most instances, not neglectfully so, because volunteer help is so hard to come by, adding the extra burden of required training seems to be a test of the volunteer's patience. Hence, the importance of enlisting individuals who are called to the task. Training will not be viewed as burdensome, but as a welcome part of ministry enhancement.

Humbleness and a willingness to learn must accompany calling and giftedness. Having each of those components makes the difference between good and great; sufficient and efficient! Any individual who rebuffs training, called or not, will prove to be unsuitable for the job. Never trade having a warm body in a ministry position for having the right body. God knows the needs of His church, trust Him to send those people and things at the appropriate time.

Necessary Areas of Training:

- Instruction/Planning
- Efficient Use of Classroom Space
- Bible Study Curriculum
- Behavior Management

Make monthly training sessions a teaching prerequisite. It sounds costly, but it doesn't have to be. Try partnering with a local school or teacher's association. This is a great way to enlist the help of qualified instructors who can provide an educator's take on instruction and planning, efficient use of classroom space, and behavior management.

Another training resource that won't put a strain on the budget is the local Baptist associations. Connect with local churches, inquire about training events that are being offered. Adequate training doesn't come from the one time reading of a book. Times, culture, and trends evolve, it is the church's responsibility to move with those things while still upholding the integrity of God's Word. That can only be done through continual study.

Although training is an integral part of molding an effective preschool teacher, it is not the most essential part, love is.

If I speak human or angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give away all my possessions, and if I give over my body in order to boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-3 (CSB)

It basically says, gifts, talents, and skills rendered without love are worthless. So it is with the preschool teacher. Having skill and knowledge is great and necessary, but it is not enough to minister to the whole child. One of the major benefits of meeting in small groups is the opportunity to get up close and personal with group members. Sunday School teachers are often the first to know about special circumstances or situations that require immediate ministry attention. Those who teach using only skill and knowledge may miss behavioral cues that signal a ministry need.

Executing the teaching ministry under the umbrella of love will allow a teacher to see and meet the basic needs of his/her students before attempting to verbally teach biblical lessons.

Although their young minds will not immediately grasp what is being modeled, their hearts will, freeing them to be receptive. Secular theories like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs agree. Maslow says, a person is unreceptive while basic needs like hunger, thirst, and safety

are left unmet. A Sunday School teacher who is called to the task understands that and will carry their responsibility far beyond Bible exposition. There are cases when a lack in a child's home life impedes their will to learn. A love-filled teacher will respond to such needs and make an invisible God visible by actively carrying out the tenets of the Christian faith.

Because preschoolers are temperamental, love has to take on forms other than that fuzzy feeling displayed with kind words, kisses, and hugs way that is so well known. Anything from a broken toy, to ear pain, to feelings of disappointment can radically affect a preschooler's behavior. Love allows the teacher to discern a need and administer love in whatever form necessary. The need changes from moment to moment and could be displayed in the form of discipline, logic, reasoning, and/or patience.

Last, but not least, a preschool teacher must practice discipline. The call to teach, proper training, and love can only be undergirded by first accepting God's love for themselves and next, by practicing the spiritual disciplines of the faith. Prayer, fasting, worship, Bible reading, and submission to God's Will are practices that will strengthen and solidify the Sunday School teacher's effectiveness. The old saying is true, "One cannot teach, what one does not know!" Only a real, live, vitally active relationship with God can produce the fruit expected from a teacher.

THE CLASSROOM

Of course, the teacher is the central player of the three key areas, without her the others lose their functionality. Yet, the classroom plays an important role in making disciples. It has the power to invite or turn away potential students.

A designated teaching space should be:

- Clean
- Effectively Organized
- Safe/Secure

The phrase, “Cleanliness is next to godliness,” is so highly touted in the African American church that it could be mistaken as scripture. Though not in the Bible, it is not hard to understand why this phrase carries so much weight. And, it can be the deciding factor in whether parents bring their children to Sunday School.

Upon arrival to the Sunday School space, a parent sees the classroom first! Fair or not, that is where first impressions are made. As wonderful as the teacher may be, the visual of a dirty classroom greets the parents before they have an opportunity to discover anything about the teacher or what the preschool program offers. This is not only true for new members and visiting guest. With the rise of serious allergies, even faithful members might take a look at a dust filled, neglected classroom and decide against leaving their precious little ones there. A neglected space sends a general message: “Details are not important!” The specific message sent to parents is: “The messy details that come along with caring for my child will not be attended to in this place.”

Recruit a non-member to view and critique the ministry space. Have him/her give an honest critique of the cleanliness level of the floor, furniture, toys, and windows (if applicable). Be willing to accept critiques for what they are, and make the necessary arrangements to bring the space up to par. Not only could a little dusting and mopping improve Sunday School enrollment, it could boost regular church attendance. The truth is the environment in which they worship matters.

East End Baptist Church, the largest African American church in its community, had members on the roll who did not attend because of that very thing. A young couple with small children were less than enthused by the nursery space. They shared their concerns with the pastor and informed him they would return once that grievance was corrected. For no reason, other than the appearance of the nursery, did this tithing couple make the decision to leave their names on the church roll, but attend another church that met their parental qualifications. If parents are expected to leave their children in the preschool classroom, nursery, or toddler area for 52 Sundays a year, the environment must be an acceptable one.

Even churches that have up-to-date facilities would do well to follow the advice of inviting an outsider in to critique the cleanliness of the ministry space. Neither the pastor nor any of the current members of the congregation can give an unbiased inspection, all are too familiar, and familiarity is the enemy that is causing too many churches to miss out on prospective members.

A clean classroom is a good start and a wonderful draw for parents and potential teachers as well. But, because a lot happens in the preschool space: diaper changes, messy spills, and accidents, whole group play, centers, and much more, cleanliness must be accompanied by effective organization. Effective organization lends to greater teacher efficiency.

As previously stated, the preschool environment is unique as its attendees will utilize the floor space as one of its learning tools. Little ones will crawl, roll, and toddle their way through the learning process, all from the floor. This age of discovery calls for careful arrangement of every corner of space.

In some situations, the need for more space might really equate to a better use of the current space. Churches with multi-purpose spaces can maximize its use by making a list of all the activities that will take place in the designated space. Create a schedule for the anticipated times those things will occur. Arrange the furniture, shelving, and/or storage units in a way that will work with the schedule. Allow for emergency and unexpected happenings that come along with working in the preschool environment. Items that are routinely used should be easily accessible and stored in the space that correlates with its use.

Finally, cleanliness and effective use of space is empowered by safety. Preschoolers are curious little people who learn through the use of all five senses. Tasting, touching, and smelling are primary. For this age group, all things are new and inviting. Be sure to keep the students from discovering something that could be dangerous.

Do not use house cleansers or any other harmful chemicals within the children's reach. Utilize child safety locks on cabinets and storage units. Be sure to plug all unused outlets with the appropriate safety

devices. All wires and cords should be covered or securely attached to the wall or floor.

Create a child safety plan that includes what to do in case of a weather, missing child, or medical emergency. Each worker and teacher should receive training before being left alone with the students. Schedule regular drills for every scenario!

Create a registration form inclusive of demographic information such as: child's name, parents name, parents cell, and address. Be sure to include emergency information such as: allergies, medicines, and any other pertinent information that could impact the child's care. At registration, assign each family a permanent number and an emergency password. The number can be used for summoning a parent from the sanctuary and for child pick-up.

Take the time to give all new parents a tour of the ministry space, and a thorough description of all safety routines and policies. This is beneficial for churches of all sizes.

THE STRUCTURE

Generally, preschool age is defined as three to six years old. However, in the life of the church infants and toddlers may fall under the preschool umbrella. In any case, having a working knowledge of the stages of growth and development will dictate the class structure. Another consideration concerning structure, federal law requires day care facilities to have x number of teachers for x number of students. For example, classes containing more than 10 three-year-olds must have 2 teachers. For integrity sake and the safety of all involved churches should consider having no less than 2 adults in all small group environments.

Classes can be divided into as many as three groups:

- Nursery (birth to 18 months)

- Toddlers (2 – 3 years)
- Preschoolers (4 – 5 years)

Or, classes can be condensed into two groups:

- Nursery (birth – 2 years)
- Preschoolers (3 – 5 years)

However it is grouped, consider the following developmental milestones when planning activities for each age group:

Birth to Age Two **Teacher/Student Ratio: 2:5**

Caring for this age group may seem like the least spiritual task, as the teaching of biblical precepts are not readily evident. When in fact, it is one of the greatest spiritual tasks one can have! Instead of teaching about God's love and His desire for Christians to emulate Him and His ways, nursery workers display those very things. It is God's love in action.

Leaving a young baby in another's care is very hard and is not done often during the Sunday School hour. However, in churches where Sunday School and a morning worship are taking place simultaneously, it does happen and it pays to have some idea of what will attract and retain parent favor.

Infants respond well to cuddling, eye contact, and conversation. They benefit from looking at patterns, feeling and experiencing various textures, and listening to soothing sounds. An ideal activity schedule consists of:

- Parent greeting
- Feeding – Check with parent for schedule.
- Diaper Check (*5 mins.*)
- Tummy Time (*15 mins.*)

- Interactive Play – Teacher should hold baby while making eye contact and carrying on a conversation. (20 mins.)
- Independent Play – Place baby on back provide visual stimulation with a patterned rattle or mobile. (15 mins.)
- Diaper Check (5 mins.)
- Prepare for Parent Pick-up – Gather all the babies’ belongings and prepare for parent pick-up. (5 mins.)

Infant care will require some “big-ticket” items: changing table, crib, and/or a safety-approved swing. At least one of these items should be secured before offering infant care services.

Upon arrival, greet parents and inquire about feeding and changing times for the baby. Conduct a diaper check, just in case! If able, spread a blanket on the floor or in the crib, place baby on its tummy. This helps to strengthen neck muscles. Do not place the child on its tummy to sleep! Make every effort to cradle the baby while giving direct eye contact and talking. This a vital part of the child’s language development. Researchers are starting to believe the educational disparity between poor and middle class children is directly related to the amount of language exposure received between birth and age three.

Next, place the baby on its back, and use a patterned mobile to provide visual stimulation. Allow him/her to independently interact with the mobile. Consider it exercise for the baby’s developing optic nerves.

Finally, conduct one last diaper check before gathering all the baby’s belongings for parent pick-up. Remember to organize the space according to the schedule and the needs of the attendees. The schedule times listed above are based on a sixty-minute schedule. Adjust times and activities to fit the ministry needs.

Toddlers, ages one to two years have favorite things, and people. Spending time with a stranger may not be appealing. Be prepared to console and comfort incoming attendees. Also, toddlers are mobile and need an area that will allow exploration. Both fine and gross motor

skills are developing and it can be seen in the activities they enjoy. To become familiar with the things around them, new items are often placed in the mouth, so beware!

An ideal activity schedule may consist of:

- Face-to-Face Greetings
- Free Play (*15 mins.*)
- Whole Group Learning Through Song (*5 mins.*)
- Bible Story Time (*15 mins.*)
- Guided Play (*15 mins.*)
- Parent Pick-up Preparation (*10 mins.*)

The above schedule may seem daunting initially, but it is purposely designed to maintain order and will prove beneficial once both the teacher and students are acclimated.

Face to face greetings are an opportunity to ask about pertinent needs or concerns. It gives parents a reassurance that their child will be properly cared for. It means a great deal when the teacher takes the time to ask about the child's needs.

Free-Play stations should contain age-appropriate toys. Upon arrival, students will be placed at one of the stations for independent play time. This will allow the teacher to welcome arriving students while supervising student play. However, the space must be strategically arranged to allow for that simultaneous interaction. This is something to consider when arranging or designating spaces for this ministry. The arrangement of the room is far more important than size, especially in a one-teacher ratio situation.

Whole group singing can be used as a signal that class is beginning, and students should be seated in a designated area. Try to use songs that will either undergird the lesson, or one that provides biblical instruction like, the books of the Bible song. Also, it would be

beneficial to use the same song for at least four weeks at a time. At this age, imitating behaviors and following one step commands are developing skills that can be enhanced by repetition.

The ending of the song will signal the start of story time. The teacher only has a short amount of time for story telling due to the students' inability to stay engaged for long periods of time. Use lots of colorful pictures, hand gestures, props and varying voice intonations to help with that. When preparing to teach, take the time to learn/memorize the selected Bible story. Nothing will turn this audience off quicker than a monotone, complicated reading directly from the King James version of the Bible. However, as you tell the story, be sure to have your Bible open, maybe pick it up, and make continual references to it. By doing so, a seed is being planted.

Once the story/lesson is complete, give the students an opportunity to interact with story props. Guide them through character identification, story details, and encourage elaboration. This provides a much-needed personal connection.

3-5 Years of Age

Teacher/ Student Ratio: 2:10

Officially classified as preschoolers, this age group is becoming self-aware and independent. On the younger end of this age range: they are learning to hone in on things of interest, they explore the world by asking questions, and can be very literal. On the older end of the age range they can: follow 2-3 step directions, name friends, make story predictions, dislike unexpected changes in the routine and their fine and gross motor skills are evident.

The activity schedule should consist of:

- Personal greetings
- Devotions – song, prayer, scripture and pledge to the Bible, Christian and American flags (5 mins.)

- Whole Group Bible Lesson (*10-15 mins.*)
- Lesson-Centered Arts and Crafts (*20 mins.*)
- Clean-up (*10 mins.*)
- Lesson Recall and Review (*10-15 mins.*)

Personally greeting each child helps to establish relationships. One teacher boasts of having individual handshakes and exchanges with each one of his students. This makes the child feel special and ensures him/her that they are more than one face in a crowd of many. While that might take a while to establish, or might be out of the realm of possibility, a simple smile and a warm hello will do the trick.

Devotions are important as they introduce the preschoolers to unabashed worship of God, presents prayer as an open line of communication between them and God, and instills reverence for God's Holy Word. Be sure to give willing participants the opportunity to lead worship.

Although sitting still is not their favorite thing to do, preschoolers love a good story filled with voice changes, pictures and props. Make every effort to present the Bible lesson in a relatable context with real-world connections, examples and comparisons from popular cartoons, movies, television shows, and/or age appropriate music.

Focus and use of the imagination are developing skills at this age, so be sure to draw the listeners in by soliciting story predictions, and placing special emphasis on pertinent information that will help to drive the lesson objective home.

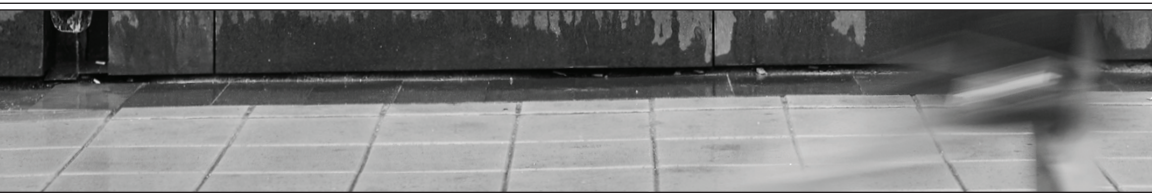
After the Bible lesson, the teacher needs a way of reviewing what has been taught. This can be done through an arts and crafts project, or game play. The schedule lists both arts and crafts in addition to lesson recall/review. One or the other can be done with the same results.

CHAPTER 6

TEACHING CHILDREN



Brenda M. Croston



One of the major battles facing the African American community today is safety. Safety from brutality, safety from racism, and safety from educational gaps, just to name a few! Many are seeking refuge, but are hard pressed to find it. In the not so distant past, the church was that place, a safe house. Kids came to Sunday School greeted by the loving arms of a teacher, smiling faces of friends, and unwittingly gained a healthy sense of self. Somewhere along the way, the church lost its reputation as a safe house.

This chapter's aim is to restore safety to Black Church Life through the Children's Sunday School class. In the previous chapter, the preschool setting was depicted as an untapped discipleship and member retention tool, due to its potential to embed the gospel in the influential hearts and minds of developing youngsters. The Children's class has a similar capability. It could possibly lure the un-churched. It is safe to say preschool age Sunday School attendees are brought to church by a parent or guardian, while a greater number of children ages 6-11 years may be dropped off or are the guests of a peer. Consequently, the probability of the parents being un-churched is high.

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL AS AN EVANGELISM TOOL

How is that relevant to the concentrated efforts of this book? Parents are apt to follow their children's schedule and a meaningful, event-filled Sunday School could be the draw that brings them to church, and plant evangelism seeds for neighbors, friends, and family members as well. A meticulously designed Children's Sunday School class, one that offers children: refuge, strong role-models, and self-esteem building opportunities is the perfect evangelism tool.

Too often the African American mother who sends her children to church is thought of as neglectful or uninvolved. While that may be true for some, that assumption is not applicable to the majority. Fifty years ago, most parents sent their children to Sunday School and were thought of as responsible, well-meaning folks and were touted as ones

who wanted the best for their children. Why isn't that still the pervasive thought? And, why has no one in the church realized the reverse thinking has played a part in theoretically closing the church doors? Going back and forth over the particulars will not benefit the mission. What will help is constructing a plan to rectify the problem.

Chapter five discusses the key areas of a successful preschool setting: the teacher, the classroom, and the structure. Those things are universal and should be considered for the children's setting as well. They will not be revisited here. Instead, the ministry target (children), potential ministry touches, and ministry curriculum will be highlighted.

The Ministry Target and Touches

It is often said, "The way to a man's heart is through his belly." Quite the opposite is true for women. The way to a woman's heart is through her child and fathers feel the same way. Imagine creating a ministry that blesses a child so thoroughly that it touches the hearts of the parents.

Angela, a member of one of the largest African American churches in her city has that testimony. Angela and her family joined their church because of the many ways it reached out to the children and youth. At the time, the church ministries included Sunday School, Summer Day Camp, Tutoring, SAT Prep, Teen Bible Challenge, Specialized Holiday Celebrations, College Tours, Choir Tours, Children's Choir, and A Young Investors Club. Once Angela and her family joined, she became actively involved in carrying out the mission of those ministries because she understood the importance of having ministries that allow children and youth to feel connected to the church body.

Angela's story is reminiscent of the gateway possibilities a highly functional Sunday School can offer. Parents like Angela are looking for a place of worship that will minister to both the present and future needs of children. The first step in obtaining that goal is to gain insight into the child. Designing a children's class that specializes in outreach is dependent upon having knowledge of the varying

emotional, physical, intellectual and social tendencies, and being able to create ministry opportunities that speak to those natural inclinations.

CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL MINISTRY: AGES 6-11 YEARS

Pertinent growth and development information for each age group is listed below along with outreach strategies called Ministry Touches. The touches provided below are models and should be tweaked to fit individual needs. Variations will also be necessary depending upon available resources. The models are geared toward churches with limited budgets. However, those with flexible budgets will have the freedom to supplement budget friendly suggestions with advanced materials and/or technology.

There is one non-negotiable commonality for every church regardless of size and budget. The Sunday School ministry should be connected to all other children's activities within the church. Children should have access to and information about outings, events, additional Bible studies, or rehearsals during the Sunday School hour. Think about Sunday School like a public school's homeroom class. Homeroom is where students get pertinent information about what is going on within the life of the school, such should be the case with Sunday School. The idea is to give the child plenty of options and opportunities to immerse himself/herself in the church's culture. In this way, you are reaching both the child and his/her parent/guardian with the holistic care the church provides. The parents might not come to Sunday School, but they will attend special events in which their child is involved.

First and Second Grades: Ages 6-7 Years

This age group is a wonder to watch as the girls tower over the boys in height and brute. Their competition genes seem to kick into overdrive which is a perfect match for the burst of energy that seems to go on forever. Physical activities involving building and creating are of interest. Their sense of fair, right and wrong and possessiveness have

surfaced along with the need to be liked. One of the most useful pieces of information is this age group likes to talk and their interests have grown about as much as their attention spans.

Ministry Touch

Create a Student Interest Inventory (All About Me) that includes basic demographic information, special interest, likes, dislikes, and hobbies. Send it home and request parents/guardians help with completion. Have students draw a self-portrait to go along with the inventory. Each month feature one of the students and give them the opportunity to present their All About Me to the class. Send an invitation to the featured student's parent to attend the presentation. This gives the student an opportunity to talk about his/her growing interest, allows the parents an up-close view of what is happening in the classroom, and the teacher learns about the student from the student's perspective.

Third and Fourth Grades: Ages 8-9 Years

Body awareness is a factor for girls as the changes are physically and emotionally evident. This age group's problem solving and logic and reason skills are developing. That coincides with real world issues that are becoming a concern, like losing a loved one, family problems, and money issues. They are starting to recognize and react to others feelings. Both the boys and girls desire parental and adult support, but are not willing to articulate that need. As unbelievable as it may sound, talk about sex among peers is prevalent, and they are in need of factual information to dispel the uniformed conversations floating around them.

Ministry Touch

Collaborate with the children's director, youth minister or the person responsible for making the decisions for the Children's Ministry. Plan a "Real-World Institute." Offer one class per month, perhaps on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, which will begin preparing the children for life events and answer some of their growing concerns about body image, sex, and etiquette.

Examples:

JANUARY—*Cooking 101* (invite church senior adults to share easy recipes for a hands-on cooking experience)

FEBRUARY—*Me and My Money* (enlist a bank representative to help students set up savings accounts)

MARCH—*My Body is Changing* (solicit help from local pediatricians, nurses, and other medical personnel you have access to)

APRIL—*Death is a Part of Life* (enlist a children's pastor or senior pastor to facilitate this session)

MAY—*Eating with the President* (table etiquette made fun with a fancy luncheon)

JUNE—*Cooking 102* (more easy recipes shared by church senior adults)

JULY—*More About Money* (follow up on savings goals)

AUGUST—*Wonderful Me* (self-esteem)

SEPTEMBER—*Back to School* (partner with a local elementary school teacher to provide homework helps)

OCTOBER—*Shopping on a Budget – Part 1* (plan an interactive field trip to the grocery store to “shop” for food items. Make a list, clip coupons and search for sale items)

NOVEMBER—*Shopping on a Budget – Part 2* (allow students to make the actual purchases, then use the food items to prepare give away bags for a local food pantry or a fellow church member who may be in need.)

DECEMBER—*Night on the Town* (plan to visit a ballet, opera, or theatre event)

These are great ways to display what ministry is all about! Jesus came so that we could experience life more abundantly and He conducted up-close, everyday ministry, not from a pulpit or classroom, but among the people. We are tasked to do the same.

Fifth and Sixth Grades: Ages 10-11 Years

The boys are finally joining the girls in their adolescent growth spurts. Except, the girls are reaching a peak and are having a hard time adjusting to the changes in their bodies and emotions. Abstract concepts are easier to understand at this age, and the children are beginning to use critical thinking skills. The downside is the major mood swings. Don't be surprised to see tears from both boys and girls, as their hormones are slightly out of whack. It is important to allow this age group to make important decision, provide opportunities for them to put those newly discovered critical thinking skills to work. Socializing is very important, opportunities to interact with peers in varying situations are a must.

Ministry Touch

Create a board where students can place their extra-curricular activities schedules. Have the students to submit their schedules as early as possible for scheduling purposes. Randomly select a name or two each month, procure the church van or parent volunteers to shuttle the entire class (or those who are available) to support the student. Make this a routine event. Be sure to support each child at, at least, one event. This will require extra time on your part, but the benefit will be astronomical. The children will see how much you care, and your presence will be a silent ministry to the parents. This also gives the students an opportunity to fellowship outside of church, and models support. Best of all, this ministry touch encourages bonding.

THE CURRICULUM

There are a vast number of small group materials to choose from, most of which are excellent resources. However, curriculum cannot be treated as a one size fits all. Truthfully, some of the material contain solid doctrinal and biblical content, but the songs and activities are not a cultural match. Therefore, making a recommendation is not ideal. Each church has its own culture and knows what will work best. Instead of a recommendation, here are some things to think about when choosing curriculum and how to incorporate some standard routines.

When choosing, do:

- choose a curriculum that can be printed with various Bible translations. The King James Version of the Bible is a complicated read. Try to use a version that the children will understand, but choose one that is a true translation of God's word.
- look for materials that are easily adaptable to the needs of the church. No curriculum will be a perfect fit, expect to have to do some modifications. However, if the material will be completely different after a modification, leave it on the shelf.
- find what works and stick to it for a while. Change is good, but too much change at the wrong time will greatly affect this age group. Routine is important.
- choose a curriculum that is interactive or that can be easily adapted to become interactive.
- choose a curriculum that summarizes the Bible lesson, but invites/ prompts the children to read pertinent portions of the scripture from the Bible.
- choose a curriculum that can be used during Sunday morning Bible study and during the weekday meeting. That is to say, Sunday study should have additional lessons for weekday use.
- make sure the activities are age appropriate and connect with the lesson objectives.
- try to choose a curriculum that follows a pattern: book by book, major Bible stories, or chronological order. This will help students with their need for routine and the connectedness of a pattern will help with student understanding.

LifeWay's Children's curriculum effectively incorporates a discipleship plan that ensures appropriate topics are offered in the appropriate sequence and for the appropriate age and grade level.

Sunday Morning

Even after a curriculum has been chosen and studied, and the disciplines of the faith have been practiced in preparation for Sunday morning, sometimes it is not enough. Preparing for the teaching moment and actually having to walk through it are two different animals. It is not uncommon to do the prep work as it relates to studying and being spiritually prepared and forget to think about how it will all play out or come together. Because of that, here is a sample “1-Hour Sunday Morning Routine” inclusive of learning strategies that call for weekly reoccurrences:

Opening Worship: Present Memory Verse & Song (2 mins.)

Things We Know: Recite Foundational Truths (5-10 mins.)

Book of the Week: Highlight a Bible Book (2-4 mins.)

Review Last Week’s Lesson: (2-3 mins.)

Present This Week’s Lesson: (10-15 mins.)

Lesson Alive: (10-15 mins.)

Opening Worship—Sing with the children. Music is soothing to the soul and children need to see you worship. The start of the song will signal that class is beginning and is a way to bring everyone on one accord.

Things We Know—Use this time to play a memory game to learn things like, the books of the Bible, Ten Commandments or the twelve disciples. This can also be used as a space filler. There is usually a small gap of time when the teacher is welcoming students, and is in need of an activity that the students can work on independently. Create a blank chart, like the one below (8.5 x 11) and laminate it.

Place the laminated charts in the designated work space along with dry erase markers and pieces of old tee-shirts or socks to be used as an eraser. Instruct the children to independently try to list the first 10 books of the Bible in the correct order. The students will have something to work on and chat about while you are busy welcoming other students. Once class begins and the time for Things We Know arrives, call on volunteers to share their chart. Then utilize whatever teaching method (song, rhyme, hand motions) you have decided upon to correct or affirm the books' names and order. This can be done weekly with books of the Bible, twelve tribes of Israel, twelve disciples, Ten Commandments, and any other foundational truth that is classified as a "must know" of the faith. At the completion of the game, students can wipe the board clean, readying them for the next use.

Bible Book of the Week—Each week, display and review the following information about one book of the Bible: book name, author, when it was written, whom it was written to, main theme/message. The goal is to familiarize the students with all 66 books of the Bible. It will also lay the foundation for how the books are connected to convey the story and message about God's redemptive love.

Last Week's Lesson Review—Using a class schedule will offer consistency. But, you don't want that routine to equate to boredom, here is an opportunity to chase away boredom. Have the students to review the lesson in different ways. For example: #Hash tag your lesson objective and Tweet, or Facebook them. Throughout the week keep the

hashtag banter going. Or, help the students to create a rap or song to review lesson. Get to know your students and create innovative ideas that are compatible to their personalities and likings.

Present Today's Lesson—Try not to read the Bible lesson. Instead, summarize the Scriptures/Bible story while holding the Bible in your hand. If using curriculum, have the students take part in reading and encourage them to voice questions, comments, and concerns about the lesson.

Lesson Alive—Review the lesson in a way that helps students construct the intended message. Incorporate a tangible item to recap the lesson, bringing the lesson to life. For example, if the lesson was about David and Goliath, pass a small stone among the group, allowing students to holding the stone while sharing what they learned.

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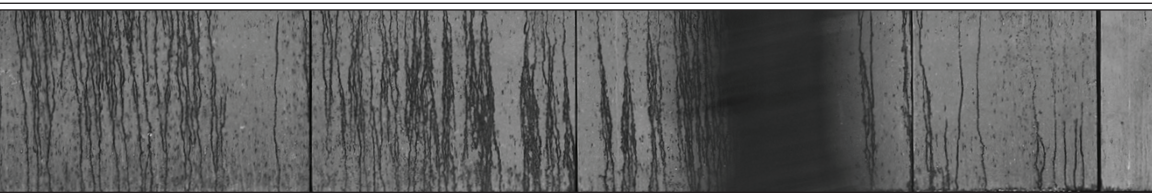


CHAPTER 7

TEACHING YOUTH



Oliva M. Cloud



As Byron took his seat, he unconsciously examined those around him. He knew Mrs. Hill would soon take her usual end seat one row in front of him on the inner aisle. Mrs. Hill was someone Byron admired. She always dressed really nice. She also made the best sweet potato pie at Calvary Missionary Baptist Church. Byron also liked her husband. Deacon Hill was Byron's science teacher at Westside High and his Sunday School teacher. The Hills often invited him and the other youth at the church to their home. Deacon Hill would usually had some exciting video games and Mrs. Hill would make them something to eat. Sometimes their conversations would turn to talk about God or their responsibilities at church.

Byron sometimes thought about how nice the Hills treated him and the other youth. Maybe it was because they didn't children of their own. "Sometimes Deacon Hill is like a father to me. He's really easy to talk to," thought Bryon, whose own father had a job that required him to be out-of-town often. Deacon Hill was very close to Ricky, too. Ricky was only nine when his father died so Deacon Hill tries to help him out as much as possible.

The Hills were not the only adults at church who showed an interest in the youth. Miss Allen got the youth together and formed a choir. Mr. Johnson works hard to organize activities and projects for the Youth Ministry. Pastor Phillips was saying just last Sunday that he wanted to organize Youth Leadership Training. "Youth are the church of tomorrow," he said.

Some of the kids at school tease Byron and some of the others because they are active in church. He doesn't let it bother him anymore. Some of those same guys who tease him have a lot of problems, at home and at school. Some have even spent time in a juvenile detention center.

Although Byron has not done an extensive analysis of his involvement at the church, it has served as a powerful influence on his life. And it all started when he began coming to Sunday School at Calvary when he was only seven years old. At that time his parents sent him to Sunday School on the church van. Some of the ladies at the church

soon got his mother enrolled. Now she's teaching a class. His father also comes to Sunday School when he is not away on business. Today, so much of their family's life is centered around Calvary Missionary Baptist Church.

Can the church, more specifically the Sunday School, really impact the lives of Black youth? Can Black youth really enjoy learning the Bible in Sunday School? Do adults really care about and spend time with Black youth in the church? The answer to all three questions is "yes."

The Sunday School can provide a solid foundation for Black youth. Sunday School leaders must never down-play the significance of youth involvement. A Sunday School with no young people is a dying Sunday School. The Sunday School provides much of what youth understand about the Bible. Therefore, the Black church must make the best possible use of the Sunday School. Teachers need to understand the stages of development and the challenges and pressures that face Black youth. A Youth teacher who takes time to know his pupils can have more meaningful results in Sunday School.

UNDERSTANDING BLACK YOUTH

Probably the most constant factor during adolescence is change. The teen years are full of physical, mental, and emotional changes. The goal of Youth Sunday School teachers should include making sure that these changes are healthy changes. Often teenagers experience uneven physical and emotional growth. Youth who are active in Sunday School will also experience spiritual growth which may not coincide with their other phases of growth. During these years youth may be confronted with new religious beliefs and opposing views which cause them to struggle with their own beliefs. Youth are caught in the middle; no longer a child but not yet grown up.

All Youth workers should know certain things about youth. These include:

- Their need to feel accepted (by peers and adults)
- The stages they go through which affect their behavior
- Different reasons for coming to Sunday School
- Their need for adult involvement
- How they are influenced by youth culture
- That they are capable of learning and growing
- Their need to be affirmed.⁵

Most Black youth are trying to decide where they belong. Unlike those who grew up during the Jim Crow and pre-integration years, Black youth no longer have “their place.” Black young people now have role models in nearly every field of endeavor. Youth teachers can encourage youth to strive for the best. Black youth need encouragers because even though many formerly closed doors are now open, there is still an element in society that tells Black youngsters, “You can’t do it because you’re Black.” Therefore, Sunday School teachers should incorporate examples of racial pride, equality, perseverance and overcoming that can be found in the Bible into the Sunday School lesson.

The “I-want-it-now”, mentality has also heavily infiltrated the minds of many Black youth. The medium of television and other influences have contributed to the failure of Black youth to make the connection between hard work and financial success. Too many youth have opted for the “easy” way out—too many illegal activities reap quick, hefty profits. The question is now what is the Black church going to do to combat these forces?

Youth teachers should inventory themselves on occasion to see how well they really know their youth. A good exercise is to take each letter of the alphabet and write a word describing your youth.

Place a “Y” by the words that describe younger youth and an “O” by those that relate to older youth. Place a “+” by those words which reflect positive attributes. Place an “X” by negative attributes.

When finished, look for contradictions in your assessments. Perform this exercise with other teachers or parents. Discuss your individual findings with each other.

Also, talk to your youth—really talk to them. More important, listen to what they are saying. Pay attention to their language. Learn what the “hip” words mean. Don’t try to be a teenager again, but it helps youth to know that you’re willing to meet them halfway.

Check with the LifeWay Book Store or at www.lifeway.com for other resources on understanding and teaching youth.

HOW YOUTH LEARN

The Youth teacher is faced with the basic task of helping youth understand God and His truth for themselves. “The teaching learning concept used in Youth Sunday School acknowledges the importance of the learner’s involvement in his own learning experiences. But there are many factors that contribute to a good teaching-learning experience.

First, the teacher must learn how youth learn. Most of what is learned is filtered through the five senses. According to *See What I’m Saying: The Extraordinary Powers of Our Five Senses* by Lawrence D. Rosenblum, the breakdown is as follows:

- Tasting — 1%
- Touching — 1.5%
- Smelling — 3.5%
- Hearing — 11%
- Seeing — 83%

Even so, the influence of the Holy Spirit to make learning meaningful in the lives of Black youth cannot be ignored.

Retention is also a very important factor in learning. Research has shown that people retain more when they participate in a learning experience in a significant way. For instance, after about three days, learners retain:

- 80% of what they say,
- 90% of what they do,
- 20% of what they see,
- and only 10% of what they hear.

So much for teachers who talk incessantly during the Sunday School hour!

What youth learn in Sunday School also must incorporate sound learning principles:

- *Need*—Youth learn more readily subject matter that meets a need in their lives. Youth curriculum materials published by the LifeWay reflect this by identifying youth's life needs as it relates to the passages studied.
- *Relationship*—This principle asserts that knowledge is absorbed more easily when it is related to knowledge the learner already has. Curriculum materials for youth use this principle by including contemporary stories or situations that help illustrate Bible truth.
- *Repetition*—This principle says that youth learn the truth of a familiar passage on a deeper level. Youth will study many Bible passages they have studied before. Curriculum materials reflect the principle of repetition by providing an overview of material to be studied at the beginning of the unit and at the end.
- *Experience*—Simply put, this principle is best summed up as learning by doing. This is why involvement activities and methods are included in Youth Bible study. It is better to facilitate a youth's discovery of God's truth as opposed to simply telling him.
- *Imitation*—This principle requires Youth teachers to lead a lifestyle consistent with that which is taught. Youth imitate adult behavior.

YOUTH ARE READY FOR YOUTH YEARS

Young people who are in your church for their entire teen life spend six years in Youth Bible study. What should they learn during those years? What will they have gained when they move to Young Adults?

- Youth should come to encounter God in a personal way through studying His word.
- Youth should gain a sense of purpose in their own lives.
- Youth should come to know the Bible as a guidebook on how to live rightly.

When the youth years begin, youth are ready for the experiences to come. They are ready to learn greater, deeper truths. They are ready to try and sort some things out for themselves. Youth are ready to probe the Bible. Youth are also ready to assume responsibility in accomplishing the purposes of Youth Sunday School.

A Youth class leader is one who accepts that responsibility by helping the teacher in different ways. The class leader, in addition to developing leadership skills, helps plan and implement class activities related to learning, ministry, outreach and fellowship. This youth also communicates the needs of class members and encourages greater participation. A youth class should have a youth leader no matter how small the class. Leadership should be rotated so that as many youth as possible can discover the extent of their leadership capabilities.

MEETING YOUTH'S NEEDS

In order for youth to have positive learning experiences, teachers must plan for them to happen. That is why teaching must be pupil-oriented. The Youth teacher must first study the Bible and material so that he understands it. Then those materials must be taught at a youth's level of development.

Often Black youth are confronted all too early with life's harsh realities: an unstable economy, racial discrimination, poorly equipped schools. Black youth are also likely to engage in pre-marital sex. Drug trafficking is heavily pushed in the Black communities. For many low-income youth, selling drugs is a way of earning money to get the things their parents can't afford.

From a very real standpoint, Black youth who have families receiving public assistance may be steered away from the usual fast food chain jobs because that money can be traced back to the family by the government, causing their assistance to be cut. Monies earned illegally cannot be traced to the family through a social security number.

Youth gangs can affect youth in two ways: those who join them and those who live in fear of them. Black Youth teachers must enable Black youth to know God and His teachings in a very real way; one that is applicable to the circumstances of Black youth. The only way to make these materials meaningful and applicable is for the learner to discover the truth for himself. The teacher must plan for three basic steps when determining how to teach a session:

- *Motivation*—means building upon a youth's curiosity, perceived needs, interests, and creative tension.
- *Examination*—means discovering the original meaning and discovering how truth transcends time and history.
- *Application*—means discovering ways youth can apply biblical truths and determining a cause of action that reflects change.

Since many youth do not come to Sunday School with Bible study as a top priority, the responsibility for motivation lies with the teacher.

When considering the examination step, teachers must lead youth to discover what the Scriptures reveal to modern society and more particularly the youth as an individual.

In the application step, the teacher must help youth learn ways to apply the Bible's truth to his or her life. Youth need to know the Bible as a

book with answers to their problems. They need to know the Bible as more than an authoritative book of rules and laws. Rather, they should see the Bible as a help, a resource, and the answer for many of life's questions. The teaching methods for application provide some means through which youth can grasp the truth of the Scripture and live out that truth.

The concept of learner involvement is key to teaching youth the Bible and key to the design of Southern Baptist curriculum materials. Practical ways to involve learners are included in each study session. Each session also includes a variety of teaching methods.

Examine the curriculum materials being used by your youth now. Choose a session at random and read the suggestions for teaching. Find the points at which the basic steps of motivation, examination and application are included.

Curriculum materials also include suggestions for using various size groups to facilitate learning. These suggestions provide help for teaching a wide range of ages in a single teaching unit. Youth may be divided into teams to do assignments. Providing a variety in the size of groupings will aid in helping youth learn.

Suppose your church has eight youth enrolled in Sunday School: two in the seventh grade, one in the eighth grade, one in the ninth grade, two in the tenth grade, one in the eleventh grade, and one in the twelfth. Which curriculum series would best suit the needs of your youth? LifeWay offers several Sunday School and Small Group curriculum choices and any one of them can be used effectively with such a wide range of ages. They follow a Wise Discipleship Plan to make sure every student gets what they need to develop as disciples at the right time in their lives. All the LifeWay series use the concept of learner involvement in their approach to teaching-learning. With these series, teachers need to be concerned with the three basics: motivation, examination, and application. Learn more at LifeWay.com.

REACHING TO MEET THE NEEDS OF BLACK YOUTH

There are four important reasons for reaching youth:

1. Youth have needs.
2. God is concerned about the needs of youths.
3. Youth workers (Christians) are commissioned to reach out to people (youth).
4. Reaching/witnessing is a mandate of the biblical revelation, which the Sunday School teaches.³

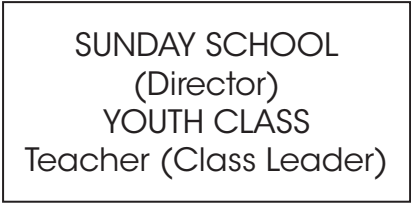
When teachers and youth work together, a powerful outreach team results. Therefore, Black Sunday Schools have much to offer and to gain in the area of outreach.

When the Sunday School decides that outreach is an important part of teaching, the search for prospects must begin. Names of youth prospects can be obtained from youth already enrolled in Sunday School. Other members in the church may know of other youth, or you may engage in a prospect discovery activity, using social media contacts of students in your classes or their parents. LifeWay.com has more ideas on enlisting prospects.

Contrary to the notion that youth cannot be trained to witness, they can be effective witnesses. They can even become enthusiastic in their efforts to share. Help them to see how they can use their time on social media to effectively share their faith.

CLASS ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERN

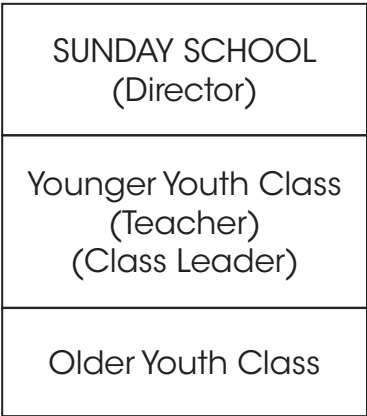
The example of a Youth Sunday School class used earlier had youth of all ages in one class. The organizational pattern for that class would look like this:



This pattern should be used only under three conditions:

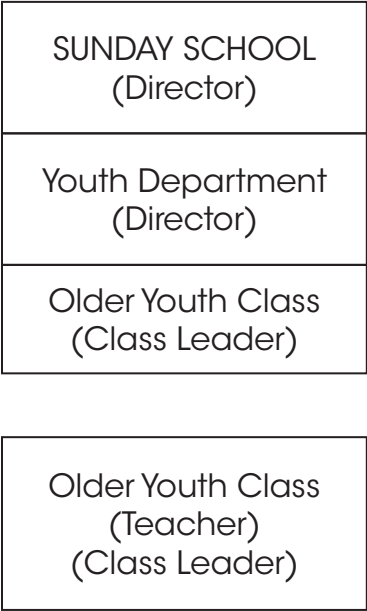
- 1. there are no more than fifteen youth enrolled in Sunday School;
- 2. only one adult is available to work with youth;
- 3. only one room is available for use by youth.

That same group of youth has an alternative, however. The four older youth and the two younger youth could be divided into two classes. When considering teams within the small-group setting for this situation, the group of four youth could be divided into two groups of two. Or, you may make assignments individually. The pattern of this grouping would be:



If there are more than fifteen in your department, you need to provide for younger and older youth in separate classes. If there are at least two adults willing to work with the youth, and/or space available for two classes, the above pattern should be employed.

If your Sunday Schools need the two groups to work separately, yet come together at large-group time; if there is space available for both large-group and small-group time; if there are at least three adults willing to work with youth; and if there is a sufficient balance in the two age groups, the following pattern would best suit your needs:



The decision of whether to divide youth into classes or departments should depend on several factors: The number of youth, their ages, and how evenly the ages are divided; available space; willing and able leadership.

Before deciding how your youth should be organized, consider the following factors to ensure maximum teaching efficiency:

Number of Youth Enrolled—A fifteen-to-one student-teacher ratio should be the maximum. A ten-to-one ratio is better, however. When the class exceeds an enrollment of fifteen, give serious consideration to starting another class. To determine how many classes are needed, consider the number of youth already enrolled as well as prospects.

Available Workers—Workers should be more than warm bodies standing in front of a class on Sunday morning. Adults who choose to work with youth must be concerned, dedicated Christians—dedicated to a Christian lifestyle. They should be committed to teaching youth more than biblical truth. Youth workers should be available to help youth grow spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and physically. Youth need someone who listens to their problems. Adults often dismiss teenage problems as frivolous. Teens need someone to take them seriously. Young people also need adults who can help them to enjoy themselves in Christian activities, someone to help them know that Christianity does not necessarily mean boredom.

Age and Sex of Youth—Youth tend to be more comfortable with others closer to their age, especially older youth. Every effort should be made to separate older and younger youth. The decision to divide classes by sex partially depends on the youth. Many times, younger youth have not completed the stage of not wanting to be around the opposite sex (or so they say). Older youth may be more responsive in a class of both sexes. In fact, it may even enhance their motivation to attend!

Space—Many Black churches are faced with the dilemma of not having enough space for religious education programs. It is not uncommon for many Black Sunday School classes to meet in the sanctuary. Fortunately, quality Bible study does not depend on space alone. If youth are interested and motivated, they can and will learn in almost any setting. In a one-room building situation, “quiet” teaching-learning methods, such as working with pencil and paper may be more appropriate. You may also want to consider having Bible study in

a home. Most youth like the home setting. Teaching-learning experiences may actually be enhanced in such surroundings. Every approach to teaching can still be used in the home. For instance, the teacher could use easels or cardboard boxes rather than walls for displaying visuals. There are many alternatives for settings in which to teach. For more ideas, consult articles on www.lifeway.com.

Public School Division—In most cases, the Sunday School age groupings will closely parallel those of the public school system. Your church may have to make some adjustments according to local division. Also, be sensitive to youth with varying reading levels and abilities. You may have to come up with some alternatives in order to keep youth with lesser academic abilities interested and to keep them from being embarrassed about them.

FORWARD MARCH!

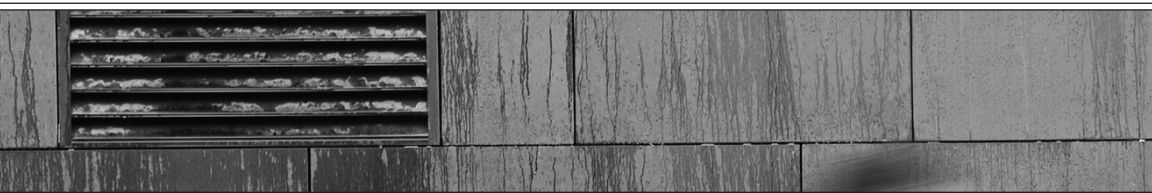
Whether your youth enrollment in Sunday School be large or small, it can be an exciting experience for both youth and adults. The present-day Black church is faced with a tremendous challenge of helping to save Black youth. The Sunday School can be an important vehicle through which to reach them. Find your place among the Hills, the Miss Aliens and the Rev. Phillips of the Black church—those who treasure Black youth and recognize their worth and their potential. For it is through such committed adults that Black Sunday Schools nurture healthy, committed youth like Byron.

CHAPTER 8

TEACHING ADULTS



Elgia Wells



The majority of the Black population of the United States is above eighteen years of age. The possibility of reaching, teaching, winning, and ministering to this group presents an enormous challenge. Fifty-three percent of the persons enrolled in Southern Baptist Sunday Schools are adults. This number does not include the workers and general officers who serve in the Sunday School.

There are more unsaved median adults than all other age groups combined, which means the greatest source of prospects for Sunday School is the adult group. Historically in the Black community, Sunday School was looked at as an organization for children. When a member of the Black church reached eighteen years of age, he or she was no longer expected to attend Sunday School. Even today most adult Black church members do not attend Sunday School.

The strategy for reaching the Black community should give priority to Adult Sunday School work. Sunday Schools should provide for every age group but the best approach for reaching the family unit is to major on reaching, teaching and winning adults.

Reaching adults guarantees involvement of other family members, especially if a male heads the household. Adults will usually bring preschoolers, children, and youth to Sunday School; however, the reverse is not often true. It is difficult for children and youth to convince their parents of the value of Sunday School. Adults provide leadership for other age groups and financial resources necessary for building additional buildings and purchasing equipment necessary to carry on the ministry of a local church. An adult member in a Black church who attends Sunday School is likely to be more mature spiritually and will give twice as much money toward the support of ministry as the adult church member who does not attend Sunday School.

No church is so small that an Adult Sunday School class cannot be provided. This chapter will give some basic guidance for making adequate provisions for adults in Sunday Schools of small churches. The materials in this chapter will be brief because of space limitations. Study Bible Teaching for Adults Through the Sunday School for a

more complete explanation of Adult Sunday School work. The small church was kept in mind as this text was written.

The basic unit of Adult Sunday School work in any size church is the Adult class. Adult leaders must often deal with a wide age span and decide when to start additional classes or begin a department organization. The choice of which Adult curriculum materials is a prime consideration. It is essential that Black adults find Sunday School relevant to their daily lives or they will become dropouts.

UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF ADULTS

One way of looking at adults is in terms of their age. Adults tend to view life differently as they move up the ladder of age. Young adults are considered to be persons from age eighteen to twenty-nine. Persons who are married or have graduated from high school, but are younger than eighteen, are also considered to be part of this group. Median adults are persons who are thirty to fifty-nine, and senior adults are sixty and older.

A second way of looking at adults is according to their situation in life. This is called target grouping. Regardless of age, adults are either married or single. Some are divorced; others are widowed. Some are parents; others are without children. Some are homebound or institutionalized while others are blind, deaf or mentally handicapped. Some are highly educated while others are limited in formal learning. But all are God's children, deserving His love through His Word.

Educators at one time gave little thought to the developmental stages of adulthood. Churches have always recognized the difference between males and females and have traditionally grouped adults accordingly. It has been thought in the Black church that Bible study could be best accomplished if men teachers taught men and women teachers taught women. This approach recognizes the difference in needs related to the respective roles of males and females in society. Today, with the many

female heads of households and the large number of females in the work force, the need for males and females in the same class cannot be overlooked.

The size of the Adult class is an important factor in the effectiveness of the teacher. Classes must be small enough for a teacher to give personal attention to each member, to assign prospects in a systematic manner, and to provide motivation for reaching prospects for Sunday School enrollment. Classes of twenty-five or less enrolled are better educationally and can more easily be motivated to involve members in the work of the class. When classes get too large, there is little incentive to try to reach more members.

Small classes allow members to be involved in an interchange of ideas and other group learning methods. Involvement is the key to successful Adult Sunday School work. Sunday School should be a totally different experience for the adult from the worship service. In worship, the adult does not have a chance to ask questions and voice his feelings on any issue. It is not satisfying to many adults to be preached to in Sunday School and preached to again in worship.

Effective Bible study must be applied to meet specific needs of adults. Grouping adults of all age groups and both sexes in one class places a burden on a teacher to meet too many needs. This is not to say that intergenerational Bible study does not have a great deal of value. But the brief time provided for Bible study in the average Sunday School can best be utilized if adults with similar needs are grouped in classes together.

Fellowship is an important activity in the Black church. Adults tend to relate best to other adults who are of similar circumstance in the life cycle. They enjoy being with each other and the need for fellowship becomes a motivating factor for participation in Sunday School. The bond that develops in Sunday School carries over as adults minister to one another in times of crisis and rejoice with one another in the happy experiences of life. The Sunday School should be the flock that the sheep belongs to. The class should know when a sheep is missing, when a sheep is hurt, and when a sheep is happy. In essence,

the Sunday School teacher and class become the primary place where the member experiences God's love. Keeping members informed of total church and Sunday School activities is another important task. Winning unsaved adults and involving inactive church members is a natural outgrowth of Bible study, fellowship, and ministry through the Sunday School.

ORGANIZING TO PROVIDE FOR ALL ADULTS

The basic idea of organization in the church is to put ourselves in the best possible position to be used by God. It is our goal in working with adults to do all that is possible to meet adult needs in the best way. The Sunday School has a unique challenge in providing for the complex adult age groups. How can it be done? The answer is not a simple one, but here are some suggestions.

The Adult Class

Giving one-on-one attention has long been considered an ideal situation for meeting specific needs. The private tutor is an example of this kind of teaching. Although possible, this kind of teaching is not likely to occur in the average Sunday School. Even in the smallest church, five or six adults can be enrolled in Sunday School. This group may be of both sexes and of a wide age span, making it a challenge to provide meaningful Bible study and group involvement. The larger the group becomes, the more difficult the task.

An enrollment maximum of twenty-six is suggested for an Adult class. However, creating a new class should occur before twenty-five are enrolled. Why? Because ministering to a group of such varied needs is difficult when only one class for all adults is being provided. When about fifteen have been enrolled, beginning an additional class probably should be considered. Starting new classes must be seen from the perspective of helping others to grow rather than the negative view of "they are splitting up our class." The decision must be made through

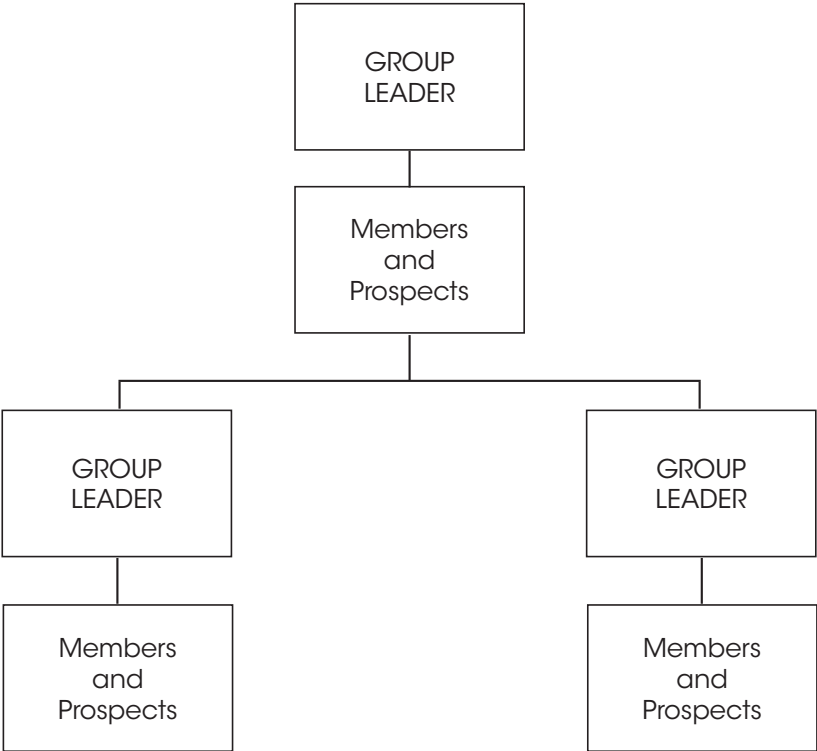
prayer based on the number of known prospects, availability of space, and possible leadership. God will provide when we ask Him to send out workers into His harvest field.

Some Sunday Schools make two classes out of one by creating a class for men and a class for women. Another possibility is to begin a second class based on age groupings. Ideally it is good to keep to an age span of no more than ten years. Group by age or by sex. Either way has some advantages so adult leaders will need to decide which is better. Grouping by sex offers the advantage of having a man as a teacher for the men and a woman as teacher for the women. Some men are intimidated by women in authoritative positions and would be more comfortable in a class for men only. Young adults are often comfortable in coed classes. This may be the best way to begin the second class if there are several young adult prospects. Other target groups such as single adults and senior adults may provide clues for starting a new class.

Providing classes based on age and sex is the tried and proven way of building a Sunday School. The idea is to keep adding classes as the need is determined and space is available. Workers must be trained in advance of the anticipated need. Classes formed with persons of similar needs will improve the chances of making specific applications to biblical truths.

Creating new classes for adults in the same age group sounds great, but there will be those occasions when it just will not be practical. There will be times when classes have to be formed composed of men and women encompassing a wide age range. The longer a class stays together the more difficult it is to create new units. Every class has positive aspects. In cases of a wide age span, older adults can share their experiences with young adults and younger adults can help older adults understand the needs and problems of their generation. Skilled teachers can involve members with similar needs in small group discussion to apply the truths of Scripture. Providing age level periodicals to the members can give written help to the classes using Southern Baptist literature.

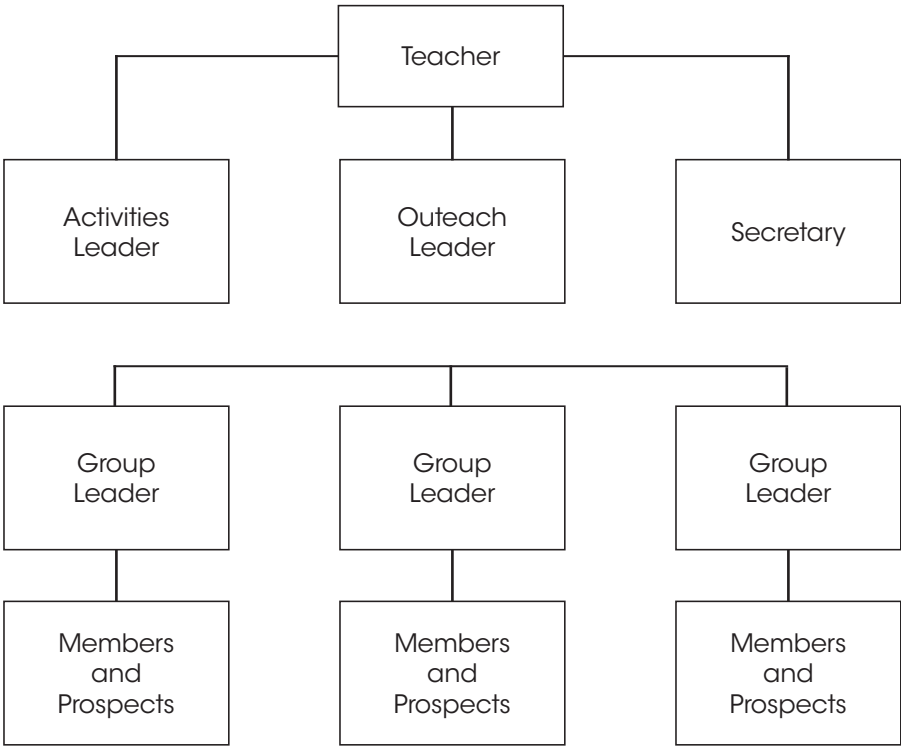
Who are the leaders of Adult classes? Consider a group of five or six adults in a class. One person obviously would be the teacher. Another would be asked to serve as outreach leader. This person should be the class member who is most interested in reaching other people for Bible study. These two leaders probably would be able to minister effectively to the other members. Suppose, however, that there are some known prospects. One or two of the other members who are regular attenders and sincere in their Christian walk could be asked to serve as group leaders. Four persons serving on a leadership team adds strength to the process of building a class. The chart below will illustrate this minimum organization.



As new members are enrolled, additional leaders will be enlisted and trained, according to the larger organizational chart.

The ideal toward which a church should reach for an Adult class organization would be a class teacher, an outreach leader, an activities leader, a secretary, and a group leader for every four to seven members and prospects. (Groups may be formed as a prelude to later class reorganization.) These leaders are recommended for a class with sufficient members to justify such leadership. It is good to give as many members as possible definite responsibility in the class as long as they are willing to handle the task.

The chart below will show the relationship of these leaders.



What do these leaders do? Here is a summary of the responsibilities of each leader:

Teacher—The teacher is responsible for the total work of the class. The teacher will provide leadership in Bible study, ministry, and outreach. The effectiveness of the class is dependent upon the teacher's leadership and willingness to delegate responsibility to others. The objective of the teacher is to lead each member and prospect to make a profession of faith in Christ, develop as a Christian and church member, and apply the meaning of the Scriptures to life.

Outreach Leader—The class outreach leader is responsible to the teacher for the task of reaching, witnessing and ministering. The outreach leader will perform much of the administrative work of the class. The outreach leader is responsible for organizing the class into groups, building a prospect file, assigning prospects to group leaders and setting the example in visitation. Ministry (including fellowship activities) is basically the outreach leader's responsibility; but an activities leader is enlisted, if possible, to share this area of the outreach leader's tasks.

Activities Leader—The activities leader assists the outreach leader in being responsible for coordinating ministry activities in the class. Ministry involves helping persons in times of difficulty, rejoicing with them in times of joy, and providing social and fellowship activities. The activities leader will ask for help of the group leaders as needed.

Secretary—The secretary assists the outreach leader and teacher in keeping accurate records on each member. Reporting literature needs to the person responsible for ordering curriculum materials is also an important function.

Group Leader—A group leader is responsible for regular contacts-visitation, casual contacts, phone calls, cards and letters being made with each assigned member and prospect. Every absentee should be contacted within one week from the date of absence. Another responsibility is reporting needs to other leaders and personally ministering and witnessing. Fewer than seven members and prospects should be

assigned to each group leader. Groups may be designated on the basis of special target groups within the class, geographical location of members, age, or sex.

For example, a coeducational class may have two group leaders—a man for the men and a woman for the women. There could be a group for single adults, married adults, senior adults, or some other target group.

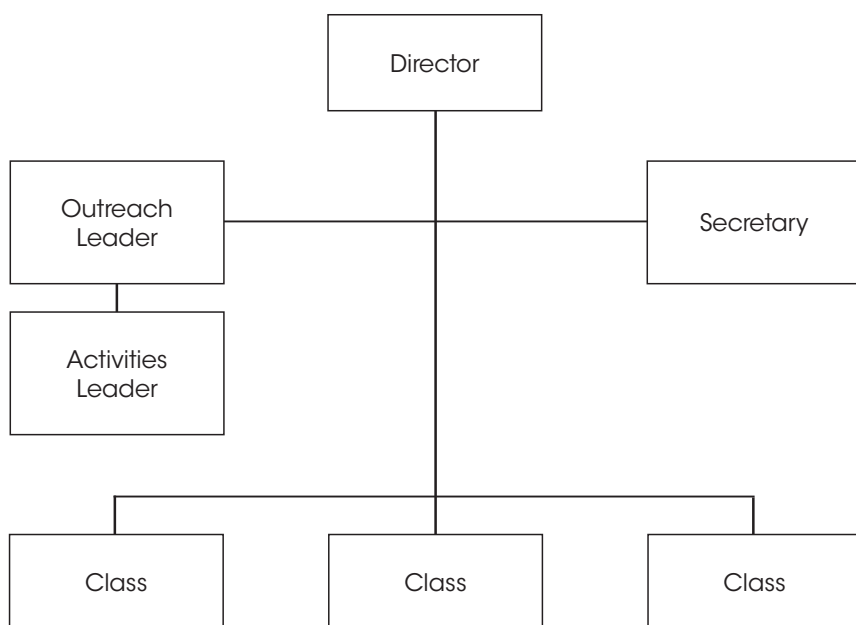
These leaders work together as a team. “Team Reach” is a concept that relates to the class team working together to reach, witness, and minister. Much of the work of the Sunday School class falls into these three areas. A team effort allows the leaders to use their strengths and minimize their weaknesses. When the leaders see themselves as a team, discouragement is eliminated and a positive attitude is maintained because each person supports the other.

It is suggested that class leadership teams meet together each month to plan the work of the class. This meeting is not to be confused with the monthly class meeting, where all of the members are involved, or with the weekly workers’ meeting. The class team will make plans for locating prospects, visitation, witnessing, ministry, and other class activities. Keeping the class organized with sufficient groups and thinking about forming additional classes are important administrative responsibilities.

The Adult Department

Remember, the class is the basic unit in Adult Sunday School work. An Adult department is two or more classes organized with leaders to undergird the work of the classes, providing a larger circle of fellowship and working together to accomplish the tasks of the Sunday School. The leaders of a department include a director, an outreach leader, an activities leader, and a secretary.

The chart on the following page indicates an Adult department organization with three classes.



As a Sunday School enlarges and adds more Adult classes, it is helpful for the Sunday School director to recruit an Adult department director to give undivided leadership to the Adult work of the Sunday School. The department director is responsible for working with the Sunday School Director in selecting, enlisting, and training the other department leaders and class teachers and outreach leaders. As the preceding chart indicates, the director works directly with the department outreach leader, secretary, and teachers.

The department outreach leader gives leadership to reaching, witnessing, and ministering; but an activities leader is enlisted to assist the outreach leader in ministry, including department fellowship activities. The department outreach leader will work with the class outreach leaders and the department activities leader will work with the class activities leader to accomplish their tasks. The department secretary compiles the records for the department and works with the class secretaries to keep up to-date information on all members. As was true with the class organization, leaders in a small department may

have more than one job until the department is large enough to need all of the suggested leaders.

Here are some of the advantages of organizing Adult classes into one or more departments:

1. The general Sunday School director can work with fewer people on the Sunday School Council.
2. The department director can give full attention to Adult work.
3. The members of the classes can experience a broader relationship with other adults in the Sunday School.
4. Coeducational activities are provided in the department.
5. Some teaching-learning experiences can be accomplished in the department that may not be practical in the classes.
6. Class teachers and outreach leaders are able to meet together with department leaders for weekly planning.

Imagine a church with only one Adult Sunday School class. This class has worked hard to build its enrollment from only a few to sixteen. The decision is made to start another class. Instead of each class now meeting separately part of the teaching time, both classes will meet together as a department then break into their separate classes. The fellowship of the original class can be maintained and each class can give support to the other while at the same time forming a new department composed of two classes.

The suggested maximum enrollment for an Adult department in a large church is 125, with no more than six classes. In small churches, Adult Sunday School departments would be much smaller. In fact, the criteria for starting new classes and departments in a small church would be age span rather than maximum enrollment. Ideally, age span should not exceed ten years whenever possible.

Small churches would seldom have more than one Adult department. All of the advantages listed above for department organization could be achieved with all adults in one department. Occasionally a small Sunday School may decide to form two Adult departments. If workers and space are available and there are prospects for rapid growth in the Adult Division, then two departments—one for younger adults and one for all other adults—may be formed.

Special Target Groups of Adults

Small Sunday Schools need to consider the possibilities of providing for special target groups. Some of these groups of adults can be reached if special provisions are made for them.

Homebound Adults—Some adults are confined to their homes and need to be taught by a visiting teacher. Special curriculum material for homebound adults is available. Usually the teacher makes a monthly teaching visit, and the member is engaged in conversational Bible study. Eight is the maximum number for any visiting teacher.

Single Adults—Nearly 40 percent of adults are single. Some have never married; others are divorced or widowed. Single adults may be reached by providing for them with a special group in an Adult class, a Single Adult class, or a Single Adult department. Their classes and departments should be organized like other Adult units.

Adults Away—Some adults are temporarily away from their home church. Some of them are college students; some may be in an institution; some are in the military; and others may be working temporarily in another city. Some retired adults may go south for the winter or north for the summer. These adults can receive Bible study and Christian encouragement through a correspondent. This Sunday School worker provides Bible study materials on a regular basis and writes each member at least once a month. Six members is the maximum enrollment for each correspondent.

Adults with Special Needs—Adults who are blind, deaf, handicapped, or mentally handicapped may need special provisions. Many such persons could be involved in regular classes, however, if leaders would be sensitive to their special needs.

Adults Using English as a Second Language—Many adults prefer to study the Bible in a language other than English. Some small Sunday Schools have the opportunity of starting a special class for a known target group. These classes should be organized in the same way as other classes. Curriculum materials are now available in other languages from LifeWay.

LEADING ADULTS IN BIBLE STUDY

Adults bring many experiences to the teaching-learning situation. These experiences represent accumulated knowledge. Adults are not as interested in gaining Bible knowledge to be stored for some future use as for immediate application. An Adult teacher should envision his or her role as guide or facilitator rather than one who tells another what he or she has learned. Adult learners desire to discover truths for themselves and to share their knowledge and understanding with others.

An informal situation where the leader involves adults in such activities as reading, writing, searching Scriptures, discussing, solving problems, reviewing, sharing, and evaluating makes for a good learning situation. This abbreviated list indicates only a few learning activities. Teachers (remember that all leaders are teachers in one way or the other) can use many other methods to lead members to do the activities that cause them to learn.

For example, if the teacher uses the lecture method, the learners may be asked to listen and take notes. When a visual is used to illustrate the lecture, the activity of looking or seeing would enhance learning. Remember, if the teacher does all the talking, the class is usually not effective. If small discussion groups are given a case study to consider, the learners will need to read, think, discuss, evaluate, and share their thoughts with the larger group. More activities result from the use of the case study than the lecture. If members work together in small groups to answer questions by searching the Scriptures, learners will read, think, evaluate, recall, discuss and share with the large group. As other small groups share, the members will relate what they are hearing to what they have learned.

No one method is the “best” for a teacher to use. The key is using a variety of methods to involve Adult learners. Placing chairs in informal arrangements—such as circles, small groups, V-shape, or semicircles—is better than a straight line arrangement. Some classes, however, must meet in auditorium settings with permanent pews. Using the first row and adding two or three chairs on each side can allow a semicircular effect. The teacher usually sits with the group rather than standing behind a speaker’s stand. This arrangement encourages members to participate.

Suggested teaching procedures are written for each lesson in LifeWay periodicals for Adult teachers. These procedures are designed to be used as written, but most teachers prefer to adapt the procedures to fit their group. Using available resource kits helps the teacher with learning aids that will enhance learning.

Teaching procedures suggest an aim for the lesson. The aim is stated from the teacher’s point of view and indicates what is to be accomplished as a result of the study. The aim should be customized for each class, based on the needs of the members and the central truth of the lesson.

The four parts of the lesson plan are as follows:

1. Create learning readiness. This brief period helps the learner see a need for studying the Bible passage. Members do not automatically come to Sunday School ready to study; so this period attempts to interest them in the study.
2. Make Bible study purposeful. The teacher guides the members to study the Bible and to discover the biblical truth. The length of this part of the lesson is determined by the familiarity of the Scripture passage, the methods involved, and the aim of the lesson.
3. Get Bible truth into life. Usually the aim of the lesson is brought to conclusion during this part of the lesson. What difference does the biblical truth make in the learner’s life? Can positive change result because biblical truth has been discovered?

4. Encourage further study. This is a brief way of helping the member make preparations for future lessons.

Teachers are encouraged to write down a lesson plan. The plan follows the four parts of the lesson and is basically a list of activities that the teacher will ask the members to do. The teacher should ask himself, “What will I ask the members to do during the session?” Not “What will I do or say?” This question helps him focus attention on the activities in which members will be engaged.

SELECTING RESOURCES FOR ADULTS

LifeWay prepares several series of curriculum materials for adults. All are Bible based and consistent with *The Baptist Faith and Message*. Current curriculum can be viewed at www.lifeway.com.

PLANNING FOR ADULTS

Three types of planning are suggested in Adult work—annual, monthly, and weekly. A lot of planning will be done in meetings scheduled by the Sunday School director, but specific planning for adults is necessary to get the job done.

Annual Planning

Adult leaders should cooperate in planning with the Sunday School Council. Setting overall goals, determining actions, and preparing an annual calendar are a good way to start the year. Giving specific attention to Adult work during Sunday School Preparation Week is a part of annual planning.

Each class or department should use the Adult Sunday School Standard in annual planning. This tool, available in a free leaflet, can be used to evaluate the work that is being done. Plans can result from checking the items that are now being accomplished and working on areas that need attention.

Monthly Planning

Adult leaders will cooperate with the Sunday School Council in making monthly plans. Each team should determine a good time to get together and decide what needs to be done during the coming month. Planning the class meeting is one area of responsibility. “Helps for Class Leaders,” the four page section of the teacher’s quarterly, and Adult Leadership give suggestions for monthly plans. The monthly plans naturally grow out of the annual plan.

Regular Planning

The need for a regular workers’ meeting was discussed in chapter three. The four basic elements of this meeting are planning for administration: planning for reaching; witnessing and ministry; planning for Bible study; and praying together. Suggestions for conducting the weekly workers’ meeting for adults can be found in each issue of Adult Leadership.

Adult teachers and class outreach leaders should attend the meeting. If there are two or more Adult classes, these leaders can easily follow the plans in Adult Leadership. Perhaps one of the teachers could be responsible on a regular basis, or the teachers could share the leadership role. In the event there is a department or organization, the department director will lead the meeting and the department outreach leader and secretary should attend and participate. Activities leaders and group leaders may be asked to attend when needed to plan specific events.

What do you do when there is only one class? One class means that there will be only one teacher and one outreach leader who should attend. How can a meeting be profitable with only two? In a Sunday School so small that only one Adult class is needed, the weekly workers’ meeting usually is conducted with all Sunday School workers meeting together. The general director and the outreach leader deal with administrative and outreach plans with the workers from all age groups. Engaging in a period of prayer each week also is important.

Planning for Bible study could be a conversation between the Adult teacher and the outreach leader, or someone may lead a brief discussion of biblical background information for age group leaders using a correlated curriculum before teaching procedures are considered. Completing a lesson plan sheet, always a helpful exercise, could be accomplished during this time.

ENDNOTES

1. Sid Smith, *10 Super Sunday Schools in the Black Community* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1986)
2. Ibid., pp. 117-127
3. Harry Piland, *Basic Sunday School Work*, (Nashville: Convention Press, 1980), pp. 15-17.
4. William M. Easom, *The Church Growth Handbook*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), p. 109.
5. Myrte Veach, *Basic Youth Sunday School Work*, (Nashville: Convention Press, 1980), p. 94.

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