



100 **Small** Sunday School Changes  
That Make a **BIG** Difference

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## DEDICATION

The movement known as Sunday School was launched with the words of Jesus Christ when He said:

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, HCSB)

Shortly after these words were spoken, groups began to gather for study, fellowship, and prayer:

So those who accepted his message were baptized, and that day about 3,000 people were added to them. And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to the prayers. (Acts 2:41-42, HCSB)

This book is dedicated to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. May His Kingdom increase!

This book is also dedicated to those who have gone before us along with those who are faithfully serving in the movement. While some names are known such as Robert Raikes and Arthur Flake, many of the people in this movement are unknown but their impact continues.

## FOREWORD

### **100 Little Things Better Than One Big Thing** by David Francis

**Excellence is not about doing any one thing a hundred times better, but doing 100 things a little bit better.** Thus argued Tom Peters and Robert Waterman in their books on excellent enterprises back in the 90s. Still true? I think so. Apply to Sunday School and church? I'm pretty sure it applies.

**"Provoke conversations about the 100 little things that can be done better."** That's the stated purpose on page 5 of my latest little book, *One Hundred: Charting a Course Past 100 in Sunday School*. Written with Michael Kelley, the book presents the principles any church can use to grow toward and beyond 100. It just does so without any bias toward larger churches.

**100 articles on 100 things.** Many of these articles were written by men and women who champion the work of Sunday School across North America. They often wear many hats as a part of their roles at the state convention offices that serve Southern Baptist churches in a state or group of states. One of those "hats" is that of "State Sunday School Director." Collectively, they comprise the State Sunday School Directors Fellowship, which sponsored this book.

**Got an idea for the 100?** Use the Comment feature on the [Sunday School Leader](#) blog to share it! There's no reason we must stop at 100 things! Surely there are more!

**Sunday School is a system.** It's a bunch of things—big and small—that make a Sunday School excellent instead of mediocre. Each relates to another and that to another and so on and so on. So what if every little thing you improved resulted in just one more person coming to Sunday School, coming back to Sunday School, enrolling in Sunday School, attending regularly in Sunday School, serving in Sunday School, and inviting another to Sunday School? Each of the 100 ideas you'll read about in this book may seem inconsequential taken alone. But put 50 or 60 or 70 or 80 into practice and see what happens!

## **PART ONE: TEACHING AND LEARNING**

## 1. The Reason We Teach by Dwayne Lee

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** We've all heard the old story about the Sunday school teacher who was teaching her class one day. She was describing this creature that was small and gray and had a long furry tail. As she continued with her description, one of her kids raised their hand. The teacher said, do you know the answer? The little boy said, well, it sounds like a squirrel but I'm going to say Jesus!

**WHAT DO I DO?** Jesus should be the reason we do what we do? As Sunday School teachers, we have to start there. Ask yourself these questions:

- Who asked me to teach?
- Why did they ask me to teach?
- Do I enjoy teaching? Why?
- Do I understand the responsibility of my role?
- Am I excited for each Sunday and its opportunities?
- Do you sense a calling in your life to teach, or are you filling a need?

There are many other questions that you could ask, but the biggest one is the first one: who asked you to teach? I'm sure you thought of the Sunday school director, pastor, or minister of education who stopped you in the church hallway to ask you that staggering question: "Would you be interested in teaching a Sunday school class?" I would challenge you to go deeper to ponder the question, "Did Jesus ask me to teach?"

Consider the words of Paul in 2 Timothy 1:9: "Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began..."

## 2. Four Ways to Find Great Illustrations by Clint Calvert

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Using great illustrations vitally captures the attention and imagination of a class. In the face of ever-decreasing attention spans, the use of great illustrations may mean the difference between a learner grasping the point of the lesson or mentally checking out for the duration of the class.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Here are four ways to find great illustrations:

1. *Listen to National Public Radio.* NPR features many programs with fascinating concepts. NPR hosts websites with links to podcasts, pictures, and transcripts in support of their programming. Many "drive-way moments" when I continued

listening after parking have become materials that were repurposed as great illustrations.

2. **Utilize Google News Alerts.** Gmail account users can create news alerts which will notify them any time a specific phrase appears in the Google News aggregator. This is especially useful if your class is studying topics relating to current events.
3. **Read, Rip, Fling, and File.** When reading magazines, tear out or copy articles you need to use later. When you read electronically, copy and paste the contents into a new document and then save in a portable document format. Fling these materials into a pile physically or electronically. File these materials topically or by keywords for later use as great illustrations.
4. **Use Examples from Movies or Sports.** If you can credibly re-create a touching scene from a movie or re-enact an amazing sports feat, you will grab your listener's attention. Unless prohibited by copyright, showing a clip of the scene will engage your learners.

### 3. Four Steps in Preparing Your Lesson by Mark Yoakum

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Each week teachers need to prepare a new lesson to help their members live the Gospel of Jesus. This requires work and focus.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Here are four steps to help teachers prepare:

1. Read the entire passage early. Preferably more than a week ahead, so you can share on this Sunday what you will be looking at next Sunday. Read chapters in front of the focal Bible passage and chapters after it.
2. Reread the passage on Sunday afternoon, allowing the passage to speak to your heart, praying through the passage and looking at commentaries on the passage. Try to get to understand these four things about the passage:
  - a. When was this passage written?
  - b. Who was it written to?
  - c. Why was the writer sharing this information to begin with them?
  - d. What does this passage have to do with your members and the way they live now?
3. Discover the main point that applies to your member's lives. Write your aim.
4. During the week, look for creative ways to teach the lesson and aspects of these three parts:
  - a. Create interest in this passage
  - b. Have members examine it

- c. Have members apply it to their daily life.

#### **4. Grab the Attention of Your Members** by Fred Creason

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** We all know the routine: “Anybody got any blessings this week?” “Anybody got any prayer requests?” “Anybody know how Emma’s surgery went? I meant to go by the hospital, but I didn’t.” “Anybody know what happened to the Jones family? Ken and Debbie haven’t been here for a while. I meant to call, but I didn’t.”

Some people like routine. But many of us struggle. We get tired of the same old questions, the same old answers, and the stifling sameness of our Bible study groups.

**WHAT DO I DO?** People don’t expect much from our Sunday School classes. And they get what they expect. But how do we change things? How do we get the attention of Sunday School members, so that they look forward to coming to class?

We could redecorate the room, or rearrange the tables and chairs. We could even try to move the blessing and prayer request time to the end of the class period. But no lasting change will take place until we determine—as a group—why we meet.

Life-changing Sunday School classes know their purpose. Sunday School began, in the late 1700s, as a ministry arm of the church—a way to get outside the church walls and into the community. Every class has gifted members, people who can use their gifts and talents to serve others (carpentry, mechanics, yard care, cooking, etc.).

We won’t have to get our members’ attention, when God has their attention. A class that ministers together will be excited to meet together.

#### **5. Three Ideas to Get More from the Bible** by Jeff Ingram

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel” (Ezra 7:10, NKJV).

Ezra provided us with a great model, not only as a teacher of God’s Word, but also for the hearer. This short verse, tucked away in the Old Testament, provides us with three ideas to get more from reading and studying the Bible.

**WHAT DO I DO?** If you’re a Bible study teacher, Ezra’s example reminds you to...

1. Prepare your heart as you seek God's will,
2. Obey God, and
3. THEN teach God's Word.

The Bible is meant to be obeyed. Teacher, as you prepare to teach each week, be sure your preparation includes a desire to know God's will, not only for your hearers, but also for your own life. Like Ezra, you must be willing to obey what God says in His Word, before you stand before your class/group and teach. As you prepare your heart and seek God's will, you will get more from the Bible as you obey and make necessary changes in your own life.

If you're a student in a Sunday School class or in a small group, then you too must be willing to approach Bible study with a seeking heart, sincerely wanting to know God's will. Then, be willing to obey what God is teaching you.

## **6. Get a New View Toward the Bible Passage** by Fred Creason

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** I grew up with the King James Version of the Bible. In the 1970s, I encountered other translations. At first, I was scared. Could I trust these new translations? Then, I became excited. The new translations offered fresh insights into what the Bible said.

We all like comfort. Some of us would wear the same clothes all the time, if our spouse would let us do it. Some of us would read the same Bible all the time too. It feels good in our hands. It looks good to our eyes. But, too often, it has little impact on our brain. We see the same things all the time—repeatedly.

**WHAT DO I DO?** One of the best ways to gain a new view toward a Bible passage is to read another translation, or several translations. Some translations focus more on surface structure. They try to communicate, as literally as possible, the actual components of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek text. Other translations focus more on meaning. They try to communicate, as freely as necessary, the actual meaning of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek text.

As teachers, we should read both kinds of translations. If our preferred translation focuses more on surface structure (KJV, NKJV, NASB, ESV), we should consult translations that focus more on meaning (NIV, NLT, HCSB). If we prefer a more dynamic, meaning-focused, translation, we should consult more formally equivalent translations.

The result can be life-changing. We see the Bible in new and fresh ways, and we communicate that freshness to our students.

## **7. Teach Dynamically** by Maria Brannen

**VERSE:** Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men (Colossians 3:23, ESV).

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** According to merriam-webster.com one of the definitions for dynamic (dy-nam-ic) is “marked by usually continuous and productive activity or change.” In the Christian realm, I think that most of us desire for our relationship with God to be dynamic in the sense that we want to be in a continuous state of growing in our relationship with him – which would often produce activity and change. So it is important that this carries over into our teaching time on Sundays, Wednesdays, or whenever we are teaching at church.

**WHAT DO I DO?** As I began to think of the topic of teaching dynamically and the definition above, several key thoughts and actions came to mind:

- Spend time in God’s word daily
- Pray for God’s directions, for your class time, for the kids in your class and their families.
- Prepare. Take time to prepare to teach God’s word and to share the Greatest story ever
- Develop relationships with your group members. Get to know them. They are all created in his image.
- Take advantage of training opportunities.
- Choose to take time to teach creatively to different learning styles.

What would you add to this list to have a dynamic teaching time?

## **8. Expect God’s Word to Speak Twice** by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** First, God desires to meet the teacher in His Word before the teacher leads group time. For the teacher, that encounter is THE lesson. Teacher, expect Him to speak to you and change you.

Second, God desires more than reciting your encounter. While a testimony is inspiring, it is not life-changing. For needed life-change to occur in lives of group members, we

must lead them to open God's Word so they can meet Him. When we do so, God speaks, convicts, and changes.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Start your preparation time early. Seek a personal encounter with God in His Word before you put together your plan for leading learners to do the same during group time. I read the passage several times daily during the first half of the week before I open a commentary. I want to listen to what God is saying to me before I hear what others heard. My personal steps are listen, pray, commit, and obey.

Having encountered God in His Word personally, I listen for what God desires my group to hear and do. I put together a plan to facilitate their encounter. I may call, email, or text group members with a question or assignment. During group time, we open the Bible and listen. Questions and discussion are common. Lecture, if any, will be brief. No one but God talks more than half of the time, including the teacher. When God speaks twice, lives are changed!

## **9. Lead Your Members to Live the Gospel** by Mark Yoakum

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Each week there are many Sunday School Teachers who study hard to find new information their class members do not know about a Bible passage and they are eager to share that information on Sunday. While this is commendable, it is not what the role of the teacher should be. The role of the teacher is to get his or her members to live the Gospel. Jesus said:

### **Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)**

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

**WHAT DO I DO?** A teacher wants a member to live the gospel or to observe all that Christ commanded. It takes work. Dr. Leroy Ford, an expert on the teaching/learning environment, stated that "**no one will work to accomplish someone else's goal.**"

If that is true, we cannot afford to just tell members of the truths; **we should help them to discover the truths themselves and apply it to their own lives.** This requires getting the members to engage through questions and activities which require them to think about the passage and how it affects their own lives.

## **10. The Art of Closing the Lesson** by Sandy Coelho

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** By now you have introduced your Bible lesson with an introductory activity that has whet their appetite and they are hungry to know more. You have brought them to a time of encountering the truth of the Word. This Bible study time is primarily about imparting information with which they can wrestle, about which they can ask questions, and discover underlying truths that are found in the Word of God.

During this time, it is very important to be sure to ask some penetrating questions that will drive the class deeper and challenge them to see the fresh ways that God is revealing himself. The introduction and the Bible study time usually takes about 45 minutes of your hour-long class time.

**WHAT DO I DO?** The last 15 minutes of your class should be the time to close your lesson and lead your class from information to transformation. It is imperative that you guard this time and plan to use it for bringing the lesson to a strong close. This is an opportunity to bring all the content of the lesson into practical terms that will help your students to understand the application for their daily lives. How? Through good questions! Through a focused activity! Through dialogue/conversation!

As a teacher/facilitator, it is up to you to use the best method or methods that will meet the needs of your students. These methods should help you drive home the points from the Truth and bring them into focus for day to day living. This time of application should help to bring them deeper into the Word where the answers live.

Sometimes as teachers we tend to wrap everything up in a neat little package and send them home with all the answers. But the best gift you can give your students is a hunger for more and a fresh perspective in how the Word provides the practical tools for living. Now go and close that Lesson!

## **PART TWO: EVANGELISM AND REACHING OUT**

## **11. Three Simple Steps to Pray for the Lost in Your Group** by Mike Taylor

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Every day the people in our groups interact with those who need Christ. They need to be reaching out to their world with the gospel. As your groups meet, you can take a few simple steps to make sure that you are not only doing the work of discipleship in the groups but making sure you are taking a first step in discipleship by praying for the lost.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Here are three simple things you can do.

1. Gather the names and contact information of people who need Christ. Everyone knows lost people. Do this regularly. You could survey the group and ask them to write down the names and contact information. As you take prayer requests, ask if there are lost people for which you can pray.
2. Put the names of people who need Christ on your prayer list. We will pray for almost anything in a very personal and specific way. There is a tendency not to get too personal with the spiritual needs of others. These needs are the most important. As we pray over these people, it will cause the conversation and concern in the room to move more toward reaching people.
3. Show acts of kindness and love from your group to those that are the object of your prayers. Making a positive connection is a first step in making disciples. We must work to emphasize a culture of love and concern for those who need Christ.

## **12. Keep Group Socials Focused on Those Who Need Christ** by Mike Taylor

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Too many of our group socials are about us and what we want and not about them and what they need. There are those who we might know who need to know Jesus. Every group social that we plan needs to keep the lost in mind.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Here are some simple steps that will aid in your planning to make your socials more open to those who need Christ.

- Socials should be accessible. Think about the time, location and cost of an event that you are planning. These can prohibit people from attending because of hardships placed on those we are seeking to reach.

- Socials should be available. Understand that most classes will only have 40-60 percent of its members in attendance. To announce your socials to the most faithful will result in most faithful attending. Promote well with announcements, email, social media and phone calls. Everyone should be welcome regardless of their attendance when your group meets.
- Encourage members to bring friends to your socials. Some will attend a social event that might not attend your regular group meeting. Have socials that will relate well to the age group and the things they enjoy doing together.
- Plan socials that are a mission project or are connected to a mission project. It is about them and not us. We should be reaching out to people who need Christ to attend our socials and our socials themselves should be reaching out to others.

### **13. Is Social Media Useful for Reaching People?** by Jason McNair

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** We all want connection. People inside and outside your group use Social Media every day, trying to find connection with one another. That is why it is a multibillion dollar industry. We all want to connect people together and to information we find important.

In fact, you may be reading this article because some form of social media directed you here. You were sent an email, saw a tweet, searched the web, or read a post and you clicked it hoping to find a potential solution to a challenge you are experiencing in your group ministry leadership right now.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Social Media is just what it says it is. Media is information or data. It is anything we speak, hear, do, see, share, or experience that passes along information. Social is simply the way that media travels, relationally from person to person. Isn't that what we are about in our groups ministries: Connecting Socially to share the most important Media known to man, the gospel of Jesus Christ, with those who need to hear it?

Here are a few ways you can use Social Media to reach people in your group:

- Start closed Facebook groups for all the classes and groups in your church.
- Use your posting and sharing as a source of encouragement by avoiding negativity on your feed.
- Share articles and blogs that encourage your group members to think through topics discussed in your group.

- Be open to ideas that may seem contradictory to your way of thinking, and be prepared to civilly discuss these concerns with compassion and reverence (1 Peter 3:15)
- Use your social pages and groups to promote community events where group members can connect beyond the group time.
- Practice typing your Christian testimony in 140 characters or less.

For more information on this topic with additional links to resources, visit:  
<http://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2015/4-ways-you-can-use-social-media-for-good.html>

## **14. Use Social Media to Reach and Minister to People** by Mike Taylor

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Many are familiar with the idea of making contacts through cards, letters, phone calls, and visits for their Sunday School or Small Group. We understand the value of a personal touch with face-to-face conversation, but we must not neglect the social media world that exists as well.

Making contact or connecting with those we have on our list is essential. Ask questions. Communicate events and information. Enrich relationships. Despite the proliferation of social media, many groups are still not using these tools connect with those on their ministry list and to others as well.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Here are a few things to consider when using social media with a group.

- Understand what types of social media are used by your group so you can be the most effective.
- Communicate weekly with social media.
- Use social media to continue the teaching of the previous group experience or to prepare for teaching for the upcoming meeting of your group. This helps with application.
- Use social media to promote group socials and update prayer requests and ministry needs.
- If using Facebook, create a group for your group. Here is a video on how this is done and how it can benefit your group for both ministry to the members and reaching new people as well. <https://vimeo.com/133695454>

Stay in touch with your group. Use social media to complement your personal touch contacts. Doing so will enrich your communication and your care.

## **15. Three Reasons Lost People Should Be Enrolled** by Mark Miller

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** When groups practice “relationship evangelism,” more people get saved than using any other method. Yes, when groups invite people who don’t know Christ to belong to their Bible Study (enroll), at least one of every three will get saved.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Your group should really be a *community of evangelism* where lost people can “belong” before they believe.

**Action 1:** In today’s world, allowing people to “test drive” Christianity is essential. Many Americans have a positive view of Jesus but a negative view of Christianity. The greatest possibility for someone not interested in Christianity getting saved is by inviting them to belong to a group (enroll). These group members must love them and allow them to learn more about Jesus by studying the book he wrote.

**Action 2:** Many individuals are curiously seeking answers to spiritual questions. These people will respond to an invitation to explore Christianity. When you invite this person to belong by enrolling them in your class, you will have the opportunity to speak truth to them in a time when they are in a posture to receive it.

**Action 3:** Many people already have a belief in God, they just need to realize the Jesus is God. These people need a group of people who will admonish them with the truth of God’s Word and will share their story of salvation so that they will respond and proclaim Jesus is LORD.

## **16. Emphasize Reaching People with Your Group** by Mark Miller

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** The first book that I ever read about Sunday School was *Basic Sunday School Work*. The author wrote about the Six Tasks of Sunday School. Task number one was to reach people for Bible study. That’s right: Reaching People for Bible Study was the first task. Teach People the Bible was the second task. Many churches are plateaued and declining because the classes and groups are ignoring the first task of Sunday School. We must get outreach and evangelism back into Sunday School.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Here are three practical ideas to emphasize reaching people with your group:

*Challenge your members to...*

1. Pray for three lost People
2. Learn a Gospel Presentation
3. Invite five unchurched People to the group
4. Share the Gospel at least one time each month

*Challenge your group to...*

1. Enroll three New Members this year
2. Conduct regular fellowships (invite every member and every prospect)
3. Plan two Missions Activities in the Community
4. Sponsor an Evangelistic Bible Study in the Community where lost people live and work
5. Adopt a People Group
6. Adopt a Harvest Field in your community, such as a school, subdivision, factory.

*Conduct an Evangelistic Activity every time the group meets, such as:*

1. Have a member share their story
2. Pray for lost people (have an evangelistic prayer list)
3. Plan an outreach event
4. Teach the Gospel
5. Practice a Gospel presentation
6. Memorize an evangelistic verse
7. Model sharing the Gospel

Just in case you are curious, the other tasks were witness to persons about Christ and lead them into church membership, minister to persons in need, lead members to worship, and interpret and undergird the work of the church and the denomination.

**17. Minister to Prospects** by Mike Taylor

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** When we think of reaching out to prospects for our groups, we might first consider inviting them to our group meeting. We have been conditioned in many ways to value the number of prospects in attendance on a given day when our group meets. This becomes our measure of success. It is a worthy idea, but the way we approach success with prospects needs to be evaluated differently.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Here are some suggestions on how to best reach prospects through ministry.

- *Value the person over the group.* Our goal is reaching and discipling people. When we do that well, our attendance will reflect that. Our interest should be on the individual and their needs not the needs the group might have.
- *Discover the needs of prospects.* These are discovered when people are engaged in meaningful conversations. Create environments where these conversations take place.
- *Glean information* from these conversations and put ministry into action to meet those needs.
- *Pray for the needs* of those we are reaching. Ask them how we can best pray for their needs.
- *Work together* as a group to meet the needs of prospects. Strategize on how this is best done by connecting with those who can best help with a certain need.

## 18. Mission Projects for Your Group by David Ludwig

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Groups tend to become inwardly focused, and to prevent that it is important that we stay focused on the mission. Jesus said to the disciples, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:14-16 (ESV)

We know the importance of studying the Bible together, praying for one another and fellowship, but we must never let the group forget our mission: to be a light and tell others about the Good News of Jesus! (Matthew 28:19-20).

**WHAT DO I DO?** Meet as a group and decide what you want to do, and then begin to make plans. Here are a few ideas for group mission projects:

- Help neighbors with some work around their homes.
- Clean up a neighborhood park.
- Have a Backyard Bible Club.
- Volunteer at a local shelter or soup kitchen.
- Work with a local school.

Jesus said we are to let our light shine, and we do that by being out in the community and serving others. Be the light that shines for Jesus!

## 19. Welcome Guests Who Attend Your Group by Steve McNeil

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** A healthy open group (Sunday School) will always have a desire to welcome new people into their group. The whole idea of an “open group” is that it is open to new people. It is not closed meaning new people are not welcome (officially or un-officially). If we work from that premise, then what do we do when a “guest” shows up?

**WHAT DO I DO?** Here are some ideas for you to consider and see if you can implement them so that your group has an atmosphere that is “welcoming to guests.”

1. **Be there early** – designate a leader who has the responsibility to greet everyone but especially has an eye out for a new person. Make sure they arrive and are ready at least 15 minutes before the start time of the group.
2. **Create a culture** – teach your group to be conscious of new people, speak to them, introduce yourself, ask who they are, get to know them, be genuinely interested in their life. While it is important to have a person or team designated to greet guests, make sure the whole group reflects this attitude.
3. **Make room** – be sure that empty chairs are available for the guest and if possible, right next to some of your friendliest group members. Someone who is sensitive to the guests needs. Who will engage them in casual conversation and be able to exhibit genuine care for the guest.
4. **Follow through** – once the group time is over, make sure the guest is not just shuffled off on their own. Ask if you can show them where the worship center is, bathrooms, coffee, etc. Ask if you can sit with them and introduce them to other people in the church, especially people with whom they might have things in common.
5. **Spontaneous fellowship** – want to really make an impression, invite the guest to lunch, dinner, something that says more than just “oh, yea, glad you came.”
6. **Potential friendships** – people who attend your group maybe looking for many things, but one of the primary is that they are looking for friendships. Show them that your group offers this as well as spiritual guidance, bible study and food. Show them they can “belong.”

## **20. Lead Your Group in an Evening of Outreach** by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Planning, dreaming, and goal setting are valuable in advance of implementation. But if you don’t lead, they won’t follow. Ask them to join you. Group members need to see your example and leadership in this important area. Give your group members a simple, concrete way to get involved in outreach—especially if they are just wading into outreach. Consider an evening of outreach teamwork.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Your planning time should assess members' preferences, passions, and schedules. With that information, here are some important tips for offering an evening of outreach:

- schedule the evening when your group can be there
- communicate a start and end time
- in advance, assign (or enlist) each of them for a team task (encourages keeping commitments)
- send reminders and ask group members to pray in advance
- save everyone time by setting things up in advance (tables, directions, assignments, etc.)
- at start time share affirmation and quick, simple verbal instructions
- pray together for God to use the efforts
- offer three outreach teams (if you have enough people): cards, calls, and visits (drop cards if the group is small—they can be done during group time)
- ensure all visits are made by teams and only at home doors—send no one out alone
- any teams finishing early continue to pray for those who are still reaching out
- finish with a celebration time of reports, fellowship, and snacks.

Remember to continue to pray and to follow up! Welcome guests. Invite them to enroll.

## **21. Follow up on Guests** by Bob Mayfield

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Why should your group follow-up on guests that visit a worship service, event, or even your Sunday School group?

A simple answer: Because we should care about their eternal destiny and their personal spiritual growth!!

**WHAT DO I DO?** If a guest attends a worship service or your Sunday School group and completes a guest registration card, then it is very likely that they would like follow-up. If not, they would not have completed the card! My personal preference with follow up is to “follow-up with impact.” Yes, that means visit their home! Yes yes... I have heard how unpopular and unworkable a home visit is. But I also know from personal experience that a home visit communicates compassion and concern to a guest. If you are willing to visit them in their home, you have communicated that your group will go to great lengths to minister to them.

Other follow-up options also include:

- Text message
- Email
- Phone
- Form letter from the church

And yes, there is one form of follow-up that is absolutely the worst and can be summed up in one word: ignore. Ignoring a guest speaks just as loudly as visiting them at their home. But do you really want your church to have the reputation of ignoring its guests? Of course not...

Develop a system and work your system. Fine tune it so that your group offers grace and community to every guest who visits your church.

## **PART THREE: ENROLLING NEW PEOPLE**

## 22. One out of Three by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Andy Anderson did Sunday School research and conferencing for the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay) in the 1970s. He made an important discovery in his research among small, medium, and large churches around the country—who were in a mix of rural, suburban, and city settings. He discovered that when 3 lost people were enrolled and active in Sunday School for a year, one out of the three would be saved.

Because that research was dated, over the last five years I have asked Kentucky pastors how many lost people are saved in the first year of attending their classes. The consistent responses from over 100 pastors is 50-100%! Wow, we need to enroll and care for more lost people in Sunday School!

**WHAT DO I DO?** Lead your class to see, pursue, and include lost people. Lead your class to...

1. *Pray*. Identify and pray for lost people in the age group for the class.
2. *Connect*. Get to know lost people, especially those for whom they are praying.
3. *Invite*. Include lost people in your invitations for fellowships, projects, meals, and group time.
4. *Enroll*. Ask them if you may add them to your class care list.
5. *Care*. Contact them, pray for them, fellowship with them, and meet their needs.
6. **Example**. Talk about someone you are praying for, inviting, and working to enroll.

Lead the class to make a list of lost people to pray for and reach out to. Lead your class to take steps this month!

## 23. Enroll + Care = 50% in Attendance by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Too many classes are on an “ensmallment” campaign—continuing to get smaller. One of the reasons is enrollment decline inevitably leads attendance to follow. For our classes to grow, enrollment must increase. But adding names to the roll by itself is not enough. Care must accompany enrollment. In fact, adding someone to our enrollment is because we and they desire care.

**WHAT DO I DO?** If we enroll people, and provide care for them, about 50% will attend. How do I know that? That is what is happening in our classes already! In smaller churches, that might be 60-70%. In larger churches, that might be 40%.

Ask the unenrolled if you can add them to the class care list? What is a care list? It is the list of people for whom your class prays, ministers in time of need, and invites to fellowships and projects.

This is much more than adding them to a prospect list. *Enroll them.* Follow God's leadership to pray and care for them. Invite them to meals, fellowships, and projects with your members. *Enroll them.* Call them weekly to share prayer requests, check on prayer needs, and pray with them. Respond to stress and needs discovered in their lives as if they were faithful attenders. *Enroll them.*

Enroll. Care. Then invite. When classes practice these in this order, about 50% attendance will result. Focus the prayer and care of the class on them. Then invite them your group this week!

## 24. Rediscover Enrollment by Daniel Edmonds

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** It is hard to be on mission without identifying the mission field and making a commitment to cultivate the field. Recent church reports have many leaders concerned about the future of the church. No doubt part of the problem is an inward rather than an outward focus. Properly understood, this is what enrollment is about: an outward focus on the mission field.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Communicate a fresh perspective about enrollment.

1. *It is a commitment to make disciples.* Instead of waiting for people to show up, enrollment commits the group to go and make disciples wherever people can be found. Through the years we have changed the directional intent of enrollment to inward rather than outward. It is not a commitment made by people to come to the group, it is a commitment of the group to go to people. It is a declaration that the group is responsible to disciple those enrolled.
2. *It is a pathway to evangelism.* Enrollment encourages non-believers to become part of a group. Groups have proven very effective in helping people explore the claims of Christ and coming to know Him.
3. *It is an invitation to belong.* Jesus and His disciples invited people to 'come and see.' It was an opportunity to get connected and be with people on the journey of life. God has created us relational and to be in community. We still have a need to belong.
4. *It is an opportunity to minister.* Typically, I ask a person if they have people who pray for them. If not, I offer to provide them with a group that will pray for them, share with them, and care for them if they ever have a need. The responsibility is not

on them, but on the group to effectively minister through prayer, sharing with them (breaking bread), and caring for them in accordance to what is discovered through prayer needs.

Enrollment is a valuable tool for disciples to use in refocusing on the mission field. "The harvest is plentiful!" Will you commit to be a laborer?

## **25. Enrollment: The Driving Metric for Group Attendance** by Tim S. Smith

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** "I want to be in your group!" That's what I desire to hear from those that I'm seeking to connect with and I hope you have the same desire. You and I have been given a wonderful privilege in leading and teaching other adults. Jesus has saved us, gifted us, called us and commissioned us to make disciples. For us to teach them they need to be in our group and that's what ENROLLMENT is all about.

**WHAT DO I DO?** It's been proven over and over, the more people you have enrolled in your class the more people will attend your class. It really is simple because here is what happens when you enroll someone in your class.

- **Intercession:** The person can be *prayed* for regularly whether they attend weekly or are struggling spiritually.
- **Invitation:** The person can be regularly invited to *participate* in fellowship opportunities where meaningful relationships can be developed.
- **Involvement:** The person is *encouraged* to engage in weekly Bible Study that strengthens their relationship to God, to family, and to Kingdom service.
- **Inclination:** The person is *challenged* and more likely to engage in evangelism and outreach than a person not enrolled in a small group.

When you enroll a new member in your class they can't help but want to be there when they are being prayed for, included in activities, engaged with God's Word and equipped to serve Jesus and others.

So here is my challenge to you. This Sunday in your Sunday School class, set a goal for the number of new members your class will seek to enroll. Begin praying for those to be reached and go invite them. If your class has 10 members why not set a goal to reach 1 new member between now and the end of the year.

## **26. Anytime, Anywhere** by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** When we enroll people in Sunday School and provide consistent care for them through the class, about half of them will attend during group time (40% in larger churches and 60% in smaller churches). To increase class attendance, we need to increase our enrollment AND our care. And everyone needs to be part of the effort!

Without an emphasis on enrolling new people, classes will not grow and fewer people will be reached. Your leadership and example matter.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Enroll people anytime, anywhere. How? Consider these ideas:

- **Training.** Teach your class about the value and benefits of enrollment. Help them to consider doing so on regular life paths throughout the week.
- **Terms.** Change your conversation from *enrolling people* to *adding people to your class care list*.
- **Prayer.** Spend time praying together about reaching new class members.
- **Goal.** Together set a goal for the number of new class members you want to add this year.
- **Plans.** Make plans for how to invite, reach, and care for new members.
- **Challenge.** Print simple class care list invitations. Regularly give them to your class to share with friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors.
- **Fellowships.** Invite people to fellowships, projects, and meals. Ask if you can add them to your class care list.
- **Evaluate.** Take time often to talk about progress on your goal and plans.
- **Communicate.** Remind frequently.

There are tons more ideas for enrolling anytime, anywhere.

## **27. Not Just for Church Members** by David Ludwig

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Do first time guests show up for Sunday School? Maybe they don't know they're invited? Do your church website, Facebook page, and other publicity unintentionally imply that Sunday School is for "Members Only?" Sunday School and adult groups are for everyone, but if you're a new believer or didn't grow up in church this might not be known or understood.

Sunday School, Life Groups, or whatever you call them, are the place where discipleship begins. The setting should be an open group (anyone is invited to join at any time) with a stand-alone lesson every week. This is different than an accountability

group or a deeper learning discipleship class where one larger topic is explored often over the course of 8-12 weeks or more.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Because Sunday School has this format, people need to know that you don't have to be a member to join. Even if that is obvious by your church sign, website and other publicity, make sure that your group members know to communicate that to their friends and neighbors.

It's been said many times, people aren't looking for a friendly church, they are looking for friends! What better place to find friends than in the Sunday School groups! Make sure your class is a place where people who are looking for friends can find them, even before they become a member.

Invite and expect friends, relatives, associates, and neighbors. Greet them warmly. Connect with them in and beyond group time. Add them to the group care list.

## **28. Find Them and Keep Them** by Sean Keith

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** In a recent blog post by Dr. Thom Rainer, he identified the single most significant factor that causes decline in church membership and attendance. Do you know what it is? It is an inward focus. When all your attention is on keeping one another happy and satisfied, your class or group will decline. How do you continue to focus on the needs of the group but also focus outwardly on the people in your community? Is it possible to have both? The answer is YES, but it takes leadership.

**WHAT DO I DO?** During an average week, how much time is spent focused on meeting the needs of the group? Now, how much time and energy is your class or group focused on those in your community who are not YET part of your group? Might I make a few suggestions of how to begin to focus outwardly?

- Pray weekly for the lost (by name) in your community and their needs.
- Pray for and plan for opportunities to connect with prospects or conduct a project in the community to meet ministry needs.
- Be intentional about connecting relationally with the unchurched and or lost in your own neighborhoods.
- Regularly invite people you connect with who are outside your group to your weekly time of Bible study, prayer and ministry.

These are just a few ideas of how to begin to focus outwardly in your community. Oddly enough, when you do that, you just might discover you are growing closer together as a group as well.

## **29. How Many Lost People Should Be on My Roll?** by Bob Mayfield

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Most Sunday School teachers want their group members to invite lost friends and neighbors to Sunday School. One of the best laboratories for Christianity is a Sunday School group, so it is natural that we would want lost people to join and participate in our group.

So how can a leader tell how effective their group is in inviting lost or unchurched friends to the group?

**WHAT DO I DO?** The simplest answer to how many lost people should be in your group is... as many as possible!

But practically speaking, about 12% would be a good target. So for a group with 25 group members, about 3-4 lost people would be the minimum for your group to consider itself an evangelistically engaged group.

Some ideas on encouraging group members to invite their friends to join your group:

- Have 2-4 fellowships a year that are intentionally designed for lost people. That means, have a fellowship (social, party, etc.) that a lost person would like to attend. Have a shrimp fry. Plan a barbecue rib party. The guys can have a night at the ballpark and invite their lost friends.
- Encourage people in your group to make the invite and ask a friend to come to the group Bible study. The best way to do this is to identify a specific date to invite friends (the date provides accountability); have brunch/finger foods/; enlist a group member or two to share their testimony; then study God's Word; share a simple Gospel presentation; and pray together.
- Bring a friend yourself. As the teacher, nothing communicates as well as your own actions.
- When a guest visits your group, ask them to join. Fill out the guest card with them. Be sure to thank them for joining your group!!
- Follow-up. Visit guests in their home. Ask for permission to add them to the group. Send them an invite to join the group's Facebook page. In other words, treat the guest like a group member – and they will become one!

### **30. An Untapped Field: Enroll VBS Families in Sunday School**

by Jenni Carter

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Every year at VBS there are lots of children and families that aren't members of your church, but once VBS is over, they are no longer there.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Try these ideas:

1. Educate adult classes before VBS that one of the main purposes is to connect families to the church. Ask classes to make sure they are at the Family Celebration to connect with families.
2. Implement a plan to connect the new families with those who would be in their class. Look for common interests in the children to help them connect.
3. Provide packets for church members pick up and take to prospective families. The packets should include information about Sunday School and other ministries provided by the church.
4. Have one of the child's VBS leaders team up with an adult leader to deliver a craft or picture the child made. This will help the family feel more comfortable as they see the familiar face and ease them into the invitation to the Sunday School class.
5. Plan to have a new class begin the Sunday after VBS. If parents know that they will not be the only "newcomers" to a class they may feel more comfortable joining. This class could begin with a Parenting Class.
6. Invite the families to class and to special events such as a Back-to-School Bash or Fall Festival sponsored by the church or by the Sunday School class.
7. As members contact families, they may discover needs and be able to help meet those needs. This will help draw the family to the church as they realize the church cares about them.

### **31. Connect Short-term Events to Ongoing Sunday School**

by Bob Mayfield

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Why does your church offer events like a men's fish fry, a ladies' retreat, or Vacation Bible School? Is it because church members have nothing else to do with their time?

Of course not! Churches offer evangelistic events so that church members can bring their lost friends to hear the Gospel and connect with the church.

**WHAT DO I DO?** But what could your church and Sunday School group do to make the connection even stronger? That's right... connect guests at church events to the

church's Sunday School. Make it an intentional connection, not a connection that might happen accidentally. Intentionally connecting guests to a Sunday School group multiplies the evangelistic opportunity; plus, it connects the guest with the very place that the church wants them to land in order to minister, evangelize, and disciple the guest – a Sunday School class!

Here are some ideas how to do that:

1. Be sure to register everyone, including guests, at every church event. A name, address, email, and phone number provides a way for the Sunday School to follow up with a guest. You cannot follow-up on people that you do not know.
2. Encourage the event organizer to include a 2-3-minute testimony about Sunday School. Provide some coaching so that the person giving the testimony shares how Sunday School has affected him or her personally.
3. Light the road from the event to the Sunday School. When does Sunday School start? Where do I go?
4. Follow-up! The best time to invite a guest from the Men's Fish Fry to your group is immediately! Yes, if you meet a guest at the fish fry, go ahead and invite him to your Sunday School class right then. Calling a guest 3 months after the fish fry communicates that you are not very interested in him. The sooner you call or visit, the more likely it is that you will receive a positive response.

## **32. The Need to Belong** by Sean Keith

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Do the people in your group or class genuinely care about you? Your perception of how you believe people feel about you guides how you behave in your relationship with them. If you feel like no one in your group cares about you, you are less likely to join them weekly in a Bible study.

People need to feel loved. They need to know that they “belong” in a group. They need to feel connected. They want to feel like they are a part of a family.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Having a sense of belonging to your group or class is what keeps people connected. So, how do you help people feel like they belong?

- Know the people who are a part of your group or class by name and their story. The more we know about them, the easier it is to help them feel accepted. Ask them open ended questions about their life and listen.
- Engage people by making them feel a part. Give them responsibility or a role in the group or class. People who have a role are more likely to attend and stay connected.

- Connect with them regularly through social media, texting, calling, at socials, events and church functions.
- Give them the opportunity for input into the direction, work and ministry of the class. The more opportunities for input a person has the greater they feel a part of something.

How can someone really belong unless they are connected?

## **PART FOUR: CARING FOR MEMBERS**

### 33. Three Ways to Lead Your Group to Pray for Each Member by Mark Miller

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Paul wrote in Colossians 1:9: “For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven’t stopped praying for you.” Every group needs a prayer strategy that encourages members to contact one another and to share special prayer concerns.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Here are three ways:

1. **Develop a Prayer Strategy.** Three possible strategies:
  - *A prayer chain.* A member would contact the prayer coordinator. The prayer coordinator would contact the first person in the chain and then the second person would contact the next person, and so on.
  - *A prayer pyramid.* A prayer pyramid is like a prayer chain. The prayer coordinator contacts the first two persons and they contact the two persons each, etc.
  - *A prayer circle.* The prayer coordinator enlists and maintains contact with prayer captains, who in turn enlist and maintain contact with other group members. Be sure that all group members are assigned to a prayer group.
2. **Use a Prayer Concerns Sheet.** Pass it around at each group meeting. List specific concerns such as prayer for spiritual concerns, physical healing, family and friends, persons who are grieving. Special needs and circumstances, unspoken prayer requests, other. Email the list to each member following class.
3. **Text.** Many groups use text messages to remind people to pray and to send updates on prayer requests.

A verse to remember: 1 John 5:14, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us.”

### 34. Four Relationship Group Strategies by Mark Miller

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Transformational Discipleship happens best in the context of relationships. Getting people connected to a group makes them the specific responsibility of a group and gives focus to group leaders to build relationships for reaching, teaching, and ministry.

**WHAT DO I DO?** These four strategies can make a difference:

1. **Enroll.** Classes are the first relationship strategy built into Sunday School, but how do you join a class or a group. The traditional word that we have used is to

ENROLL. They become a member of the group. The group still need to move them to a place where they feel loved and accepted.

2. **Ministry Touches.** Every member and every prospect should be contacted every week. Why? Because every member has a right:
  - a. To be called by name.
  - b. To be missed when absent.
  - c. To be encouraged when faithful.
  - d. To be admonished to grow in Christ likeness.
  - e. To be ministered to in time of need.
  - f. To be prayed for regularly.
  
3. **Parties and Projects.** On and Off Campus group should plan parties and projects to foster stronger relationships with members and prospects. Remember to invite every guest, every prospect and every associate member to each fellowship. Have FUN!
  
4. **Class Leaders.** Who's responsible for insuring that your classes are engaged in: Teaching, Outreach, Ministry, Fellowships, Missions, and Prayer. Every class regardless of size should have at least three leaders: A teacher, outreach/evangelism leader, and a member care leader.

Growing groups are intentional about building relationships.

## 35. Twelve Monthly Fellowship Ideas by Mark Miller

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Josh Hunt wrote in *How to Double Your Class in Two Years or Less*: "Invite every member and every prospect to a fellowship every month." Relationships are the key to growth!

**WHAT DO I DO?** Organize your group by enlisting a Fellowship or Member Care Leader that is responsible for providing opportunities for the group to build a sense of community. Here are 12 Monthly Fellowship Ideas Starters that my groups have done:

- January: Dinner and a Movie
- February: Super Bowl Party
- March: Go Fly a Kite
- April: Class Picnic
- May: Campout
- June: Baseball Game
- July: Fireworks and Homemade Ice Cream

- August: Luau
- September: Class Meeting
- October: Conduct a Ministry Project
- November: Game Night
- December: Christmas Party

Have Fun! Remember to invite every member and every prospect to a fellowship every month.

### **36. Three Ways to Use Social Media to Build Relationships** by Mark Miller

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** One word: Relationships. Every group leader should consider utilizing today's media to connect with group members. And every group should consider which forms of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. will work best.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Here are three ways to use social media to increase connections:

1. ***View, create and share information.*** Groups of all sizes are utilizing Facebook, Twitter, and other forms of social media to communicate. They communicate upcoming activities, prayer requests, and concerns. Every group member is a person who needs a place to belong and be loved just for who they are.
2. ***Share interests and passions.*** God has made each member unique. One of the great things about social media is hearing the passion of group members. Group are most effective in reaching beyond their classroom wall, when they mobilize around group members' passions and interests. Every group member is a missionary with gifts, talents, and passions.
3. ***Continue the lesson after the group meeting.*** Reinforce the central point or life lesson that was taught by sending out a tweet, an email, a link, or a challenge during the week. Seek input from group members on how they are taking the truth of God's word and applying it in their everyday life. Every group member is either exploring Christ or on a life-long journey of discipleship to become like Christ.

Social media is one way to build a more connected group and a foundation to build stronger relationships and groups.

### **37. Contact Absentees Without Producing Guilt** by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** When a class member is absent for three weeks, absence becomes a habit. Absentees often begin to feel guilty about not attending. Attending members also begin to feel guilty about not reaching out. Caring relationships work to avoid that happening.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Because you care, reach out immediately after each absence. Make a contact—the more personal the better. In other words, make a visit or a call. Express your care, even if the member has been on vacation. How can we do so without producing guilt? Consider the following:

- say hello at the door (or by phone)
- say that you just wanted him/her to know you missed him/her in class
- remind him/her about upcoming plans for a fellowship or project
- if there was a previous prayer request, ask for an update (write it down)
- ask how you can pray for him/her and the family
- pray together
- as you part, say that you look forward to being in class together.

If the person has been absent for several weeks, extend the visit for a few extra minutes. Attempt to discover a need the class could meet. Ask the absentee if you can pick them up for the fellowship or project. Talk about recent class activities. Share your Sunday School testimony (search online for *Sunday School Testimony: Powerful Revolutionary Tool* for more details). Talk about the current lesson series.

The bottom line is CARE. Contact with care because you do and no one will have guilt!

### **38. A Calendar Can Improve Group Attendance** by Bob Mayfield

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** A calendar may not seem very spiritual, but to be relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, your group must compete with the multiple opportunities that appear on the calendars of church and unchurched people. Americans are affluent people, but that affluence has brought a different kind of poverty – time poverty. Your Sunday School group is competing with Little League, band practice, music lessons, homework, trips to see the grandkids, and weekend trips to the lake. Attendance is no longer something that a church or a Sunday School class can take for granted. Providing a class calendar helps group members make commitments to attend and participate in the life of the group.

Important!!! A calendar helps the group and it helps the teacher because – you cannot disciple someone who is not present!

**WHAT DO I DO?** Organize and form a team of group members to plan a group calendar at least three months out, but preferably a full year in advance. Include fellowships and lunches, but plan something special during the Sunday School hour at least once a month and include it on the group's calendar. The monthly event can have a theme such as: Boots 'n Jeans Day, or Casserole Sunday. It might include things such as: a special brunch; a special visit from the pastor; a guest teacher that specializes in the topic of a particular Sunday's Bible study.

After the team has developed that group calendar, distribute paper copies to all group members. Next, send an email to all group members so that everyone gets a calendar. Then follow up each month with announcements, emails, and text messages to remind group members of upcoming events.

### **39. Four Responses When Pain Interrupts Your Group** by Tony Brooks

*The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. (Psalm 34:18 NIV)*

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** What do you do when pain interrupts your group? When no subject is off limits and a group shows genuine care and vulnerability (*which you should*), pain will come out in the middle of group time.

**WHAT DO I DO?** How do you handle it? Here are some thoughts:

1. **Listen to what is said and not said.** This requires attentiveness. Some will tell what is going on in their lives. Take time to listen and show empathy. Empathize with persons in pain. We all experience pain in life. After listening, decide on next steps: Prayer for the person. Who else needs to know—with permission? Care in the moment and beyond. Perhaps a person is tearing up and not talking. Take time after class to talk or set up a time to talk.
2. **Use Care Group Leaders to help you care during the week.** A teacher cannot do it all. I recommend care groups, much like a deacon family ministry plan.
3. **Have an active prayer chain/prayer ministry.** Pain happens during the week as well. Ask Care Leaders to contact you, and have them contact people on their list to pray for those in pain.
4. **Empower people in pain to find the resources they need.** Some people can develop a co-dependency to your care. Help them discover strength within themselves by referring them to professional counselors for long term recovery. Certain types of

pain need therapy. Don't try to handle them on your own. Ask your Pastor for referrals that would be helpful.

Pain happens to all of us. Be prepared to help the brokenhearted and those crushed in spirit.

#### **40. Four Mistakes to Avoid When Ministering to Members** by

Tom Belew

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** When a group takes care of those within the group, they can be a great blessing to the Lord and their church. A mother was diagnosed with cancer. She had two school-age children, and she and her husband both worked to make ends meet. Over a three-month period, their group dug in to help the family through this difficult time. First there were visits and then a call for group members to bring food every night. As the family burden increased, the group developed a plan to take the kids to school, pick them up, and drop them at the house when dad got home from work. The group even helped with the family's house payment. The mom survived her bout with cancer, and the entire group was forever changed because of the experience.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Not every ministry experience tracks well. Here are a few mistakes to avoid:

- **Assuming someone else will do it** – A group failed to visit a member who had lost her mother because everyone thought some knew her better and would make the contact. Ultimately no one made the contact and the woman left the group and church hurt.
- **Being unclear on expectations** – Sometimes we ask for volunteers and fail to make ministry expectations clear. Or the person we are helping expresses a need and we misunderstand.
- **Not listening** – Often we are too busy doing the ministry to listen. Often the best ministry is just listening.
- **Poor communication** – Sometimes we drop the ball because we do not communicate well.

#### **41. Three Best Practices to Ensure a Welcoming Climate** by Mark

Miller

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Remember this story: "Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it."

First Impressions are lasting impressions. Most groups think they are friendly. I have literally attended Sunday School classes where no one talked to me or my wife. I am sure they thought that somebody would do it, but nobody did it and we didn't go back.

**WHAT DO I DO?** If you want to ensure that your group has a welcoming climate, implement these three best practices:

1. *Enlist somebody to do it.* That somebody could be the teacher. Ideally teachers should arrive early and be ready to greet the guests. That somebody could be the Outreach Leader. Since they will want to follow up, the outreach leader could serve as primary greeter for the group. That somebody could be a "Hidden" Greeter. Somebody needs see a new person on Sunday morning, initiates a conversation and makes sure that the guests and members are welcomed and have a great experience. Don't assume that everybody will be friendly, enlist somebody.
2. *Encourage your group to smile and show their teeth.* Life is hard. Greet everyone with a smile, call everyone by name (consider wearing nametags) and let everyone know that they are loved.
3. *Remember the real test of a friendly class comes after the benediction.* Train your people to speak to each other, to care about each other. Guests are watching.

How's the welcoming climate in your group?

## **42. Five Primary Tasks of the Member Care Leader** by Jonathan Jordan

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** A Sunday School class is a multifunctional group of people, and one of those functions is caring for members. Group members need someone to lead them to care, meet needs, and provide support during difficult times. My hope is that your class has a Member Care Leader or someone leading those functions.

**WHAT DO I DO?** It is important for the Member Care Leader to organize the group to meet practical needs when they arise. Lead the group to...

- Contact regularly members to discover prayer needs and communicate those needs to the group.
- Prepare meals during a time of illness, crisis, or celebration—such as a birth of a child.
- Send birthday cards to the group members. A card can be encouragement

- Send handwritten notes when someone is going through as challenging times (ex. separation/divorce, financial crisis, family crisis, loss of job, etc.). Email and text are great, but a handwritten note is more personal
- Send flowers, sympathy cards, or get-well cards—as appropriate—for the death of a family member (ex. grandparents, spouse, parents, siblings, child, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces) or for a surgery or hospital stay.

By leading them to care for each other, group members will learn how to extend the ministry of care as well.

## **PART FIVE: ENLISTING NEW LEADERS**

### 43. Leader Discovery Starts with Prayer by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** For a group to grow and be effective, a team of leaders is needed. A team provides accountability, synergy, and improved span of care (one leader for five people). Jesus modeled team, and He prayed all night before calling his disciples (Luke 6:12). We should pray too!

**WHAT DO I DO?** In Matthew 9:37-38 (ESV), Jesus said: “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Notice your part: **pray** that the Lord will send laborers. Your job is not to decide the ones He will choose. Pray.

Yes, keep your eyes and ears open after you pray. Observe what He is doing in their lives. Listen to their testimonies of His work in their lives and of their walk with Him. Keep praying.

Take the potential laborer with you. Do life together. Eat a meal. Ask for assistance with group work: a visit, fellowship, or project. Pray together. Get to know the person better. Debrief experiences to discover awareness and insight. Keep praying.

When you are sure this person is the laborer the Lord has sent, ask him/her to come alongside of you to help you with the group. When you tell leaders you have prayed for them and observed God at work in their lives for weeks or months, they are more likely to join you. Keep praying for this leader and begin praying for another!

### 44. Three Ways to Get to Know Potential Leaders by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Too many potential leaders run away scared because we enlist them poorly. After praying for leaders, observe potential leaders and then get to know them before enlisting them. Doing so will produce greater likelihood of enlistment success.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Consider these 3 ways to get to know a potential leader.

1. **Spend time together.** Gather away from class. Visit in the leader’s home or yours. Eat a meal. Talk. Get to know each other. Share your vision and hopes for the class. Ask questions. Be interested. Listen.
2. **Do life together.** Go to a ball game. Watch a movie. Take a walk, hike, or run. Take a class together. Meet a need. Serve together. Pray together. Read a book and discuss it. Study a Bible book or passage together. Go fishing. Observe. Share. Learn.

3. **Do Sunday School ministry together.** As you get to know the leader, begin to ask him/her to help you with class ministry. Ask for help in making a visit. Don't assign the visit. Go together. Ask for help in planning a fellowship. Don't assign a task. Do it together. Ask for help in preparing a lesson. Study and talk together.

When you spend time, do life, and Sunday School ministry together, you will discover evidence of potential leaders' strengths and attributes for joining you as class leaders. This evidence will come in handy when you ask them to join you. Your prayer and observations can give them courage to say yes.

## **45. Three Things to Observe When Enlisting a Leader to Help You** by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Most teachers can only care well for about 5 people. Often teachers are good at one or two of the following: teaching, member care, and outreach. To care well and grow a class requires teachers to surround themselves with other leaders. But how do I find the right one?

**WHAT DO I DO?** First, pray and don't rush! Then determine the greatest need you and the class have. With the specific need in mind, begin to observe these three areas:

- **Testimony.** Listen. Listen to what is said about life, God, and the Word. Look for clues about what God is doing in a potential leader's life. Is spiritual maturity expressed? What do you learn from the potential leader and others about the leader's character?
- **Interactions.** Pay attention to how the potential leader relates to others. Are good people skills used? Is care expressed? Does the leader listen well? Is there a concern for discovering and meeting needs? Are the fruit of the Spirit evident?
- **Opportunities.** Do life together. Eat a meal. Go to a game. Make a visit or plan a fellowship together. Make assignments. Talk. Get to know each other. Debrief experiences to gain further insight.

Patiently pray. God will send the laborers (Matthew 9:38). Seek His leadership. Focus on one need. As you pray, observe how God is at work in the potential leader's life through testimony, interactions, and opportunities. When you are sure of God's choice, ask the leader to join you!

## **46. The Right Way to Ask a Potential Leader to Join You** by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Too often the right people say “no” to us and to God when we enlist them. Sometimes it is our fault. How can we avoid this?

**WHAT DO I DO?** First, make sure you have prayed (Matthew 9:38) and observed them before asking them. When you are sure this is the one God desires to join you, then ask them this way:

- set up a face-to-face meeting that won’t be rushed,
- tell the potential leader you have been praying for someone to help you with \_\_\_\_ and why \_\_\_\_ is important,
- tell the leader that God has brought him/her to your mind and as a result you began watching what God was up to in his/her life (give examples of what was observed),
- tell the leader that because what you had observed confirmed that they were the right one, you began spending more time with them (in life and class ministry—remind them of some shared experiences),
- tell the leader that you are convinced that he/she is the right leader to help you and the class, and
- ask the leader to pray for up to a week about joining you in this work (set up a time to get back together for an answer).

In my experience, many good leaders will give excuses for not serving if we do not pray and give them evidence of how God is at work in them. Help leaders say “yes” to God by praying, observing, and spending time together before enlisting them.

## **47. Pick up the Training Pace after Enlistment** by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** You asked God to send a leader. You began to look around for the leader God sent. You began observing the life of the leader and spending time with the leader doing life and class ministry together. When you were sure the leader was ready, you asked him/her to join you. When the leader said yes, that is a teachable moment. There is openness to learning and being led. Take advantage of the interest!

**WHAT DO I DO?** Consider the following:

- pray for and with the leader,
- write out a list of the major areas of responsibility,
- share the list with the leader,
- work through each item on the list (do them),
- after carrying out each item on the list, ask questions and debrief the experience,

- make assignments to the leader, asking him/her to enlist someone to help with each,
- debrief the assignments, who helped, and how he/she did,
- listen well, be generous in your affirmation, and offer ideas for next time (when there are areas for improvement),
- increase the frequency of assignments, and
- encourage taking initiative to carry out the assigned area of responsibility.

**EXAMPLE.** For each area of responsibility, the above list will look different. For instance, when training an apprentice teacher, you will focus conversation and practice on teaching, reaching, and caring duties. And you might give them one Sunday per month to teach at first but work toward 3-4 weeks per month before sending them out to teach their own class.

## **48. Lead Your Apprentice to Pray for and Pursue an Apprentice**

by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** In many churches, there is a leadership crisis. More leaders are needed to care for members AND to reach out to new people. Added to this, the teacher cannot do all the work of the class. Leadership multiplication continues when an apprentice pours into another apprentice. Keep in mind the words of Paul: “and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2, ESV).

**WHAT DO I DO?** You have prayed, observed, and assigned ministry to your apprentice. You have enlisted the leader to come alongside of you to carry out important work of the class. You have picked up the training pace after enlistment. Now what? Lead him/her to pray and pursue an apprentice!

Before you finish investing in your apprentice, lead the leader to do what you did. Lead the leader to ask God to send a potential leader (Matthew 9:47). Lead him/her to begin observing people in class and beyond the class. Tell him/her to notice when God seems to be directing attention toward an individual. Lead him/her to notice what God is doing in the life of the potential apprentice. And encourage him/her to begin to spend time with that potential leader doing life and class ministry together.

When your apprentice prays for and pursues another apprentice, everything you do with and say to your apprentice becomes more important. Class ministry and Kingdom work are expanded.

## **49. Why Not Write Your Own Job Description?** by Ken Kessler

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** A common, growing practice in leadership communities is for people to write their own job descriptions for their roles. Doing so tends to lead to greater understanding of their responsibilities and ownership of their work. So why not write one for your role in Sunday School?

**WHAT DO I DO?** What do you need to write one? Allow these questions to foster your thinking:

- How does your role fit into the purpose of your church's Bible study or small group ministry?
- What goals does your church have that your role supports?
- What are the special actions you take each week? Each month? Each quarter?
- What are the expectations that your leader has for your role?
- How has God gifted you to perform this role in your congregation?

When you finish, look over what you have. When you accomplish the description you have written, how will your group be reaching and growing people in the service of our Lord? Be committed to do what the Lord has impressed on your heart. Hold yourself accountable for what you have written. In fact, think about the goals you can develop for your group's ministry based on this job description. Pray for the Lord's harvest through your willingness and commitment.

Find other group leaders and share what you have done. Help them develop their own job descriptions.

## **50. Coach a New Leader to Thrive** by Ken Kessler

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** How do you handle a new leader in your Sunday School? Every year, we develop new leaders to help us in Sunday School. How familiar do these ideas sound?

- You hand them a job description.
- You provide training opportunities for them.
- You take the time to lay out a plan of action.

For some reason, though, you still wonder if they have caught the vision and understand the role. Have you done what you can? Now, will they own the vision and commit to the needed steps and actions?

**WHAT DO I DO?** How about using a coaching approach with the new leader? The leadership coaching approach encourages you to do the following:

- Listen to their thoughts about what they think they should do. Hear their ideas and thoughts about ways to accomplish their goals. Listen for their fears and concerns.
- Ask powerful, open-ended questions that get them to define their goals, their options to complete their work, and ways they can meet their goals. Here are some examples:
  - What do you want to accomplish in your class?
  - What are your options for completing this work?
  - Who else can you get involved with you?
  - What is one step you can take to accomplish this goal?
- Help the new leader decide specific steps they can take and how they can create an accountability structure to get the work done.

This approach can lead to action, accountability, and growth of the new leader. Try it this year!

## **51. Discover Preschool and Children's Class Leaders** by Jenni Carter

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** As a Children's Ministry Leader, do you find that your best friends start avoiding you and people begin to suddenly duck into classrooms when they see you walking down the hall? You may be guilty of asking the same people to lead Preschool and Children's classes year after year.

**WHAT DO I DO?** One of the best places to discover new leaders is at VBS. Look for VBS leaders that plan and prepare, enjoy what they're doing, and lead great sessions. Also look at those who serve on a monthly rotation during your Extended Teaching Care or Kids Worship Hours. There may be someone who would be willing to begin serving on a weekly basis.

Watch for individuals that have a natural rapport with children and that children are drawn to be around. You can pair these people with some of your best teachers so that they can be mentored while they serve together. Make a point to get away from the Children's Area occasionally so that you can get to know people who aren't already serving there.

Become acquainted with parents of the children, but also consider grandparents, singles, or married couples who don't have children. Always pray that God will guide you to those He is calling to serve in Children's Ministry.

Begin casting a vision for Children's Ministry through testimonies, videos, and pictures. Individuals don't want to simply fill a time slot, but they are more drawn to make a difference in a child's life. Always remember to follow the church's plan for safety by running background checks and other safety measures when enlisting leaders.

## **52. Enlist Teens to Serve as Class Leaders in Student Classes** by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** In 2 Timothy 2:2 (ESV), Paul encourages Timothy, a young pastor to be strengthened in Christ "and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also." Teens communicate, care, and reach out to teens best. Enlist, train, and mobilize them to carry out the work of the group.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Take these steps:

1. ask God to send teen workers (Matthew 9:38),
2. observe what students are saying and doing,
3. take students with you (in pairs) for life and group ministry,
4. ask them questions to reflect upon their experiences,
5. when you are sure the teen is the one, ask him/her to pray about joining the team to carry out group work,
6. provide a simple job description and continue to give on-the-job training,
7. continue to encourage and coach the student, and
8. encourage the student leader to go through the same steps to enlist an apprentice.

Following these steps will help teens gain confidence and competence so they will say yes to you and God when you ask them to join you. Don't try to do the work alone. Prayerfully enlist, develop, and mobilize teens into service. Guide them to be fulfilled and fulfilling as they carry out the work of the group!

## **PART SIX: MOBILIZING THE CLASS ON MISSION**

### 53. Three Keys to an Apprenticeship by Daniel Edmonds

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Ephesians 4 calls for ‘pastors and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry.’ To follow biblical instruction, teachers should step into the shoes of great biblical examples like Elijah, Jesus, and Paul to raise up next generation leaders through an apprenticeship.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Consider these keys:

**KEY 1 – Spiritual development.** Every effective leader is indwelt by the Spirit to accomplish the work God places before them. A key for any leader is to stay available to the Spirit to be used for God’s glory. Begin by developing an accountability time with your apprentice for the practicing of basic spiritual disciplines: studying the Bible, spending time in prayer, sharing your faith, stewardship of resource, and serving others (*Growing Sunday School Teams*, Lawrence Phipps and Daniel Edmonds). By holding each other accountable in these disciplines, you will both be strengthened in ministry.

**Key 2 – Skill development.** Take your apprentice to State or Association conferences, read books together, send links to online resources, and participate in local church events that focus on developing skills for their role as a leader. Do not feel like that you are alone in this process. Use other leaders to instruct and inspire you and your apprentice.

**Key 3 – Specific training.** Without question the best training for an apprentice is on-the-job or ‘follow-me’ training. Begin with them observing you (debrief), do the task together (debrief/evaluate), and finally they do it with you observing (debrief/evaluate).

Pray for and enlist an apprentice soon!

### 54. Three Ways to Deploy Group Members in Ministry by Daniel Edmonds

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** The writer of Hebrews (10:24-25) reminds us that we gather to “spur one another on towards love” and to “encourage one another.” Jesus says that His disciples are recognized by their love of one another (John 13:35). If your group does not minister effectively to one another and show love one to another, then it will quickly fall apart.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Consider these ideas for inside, through, and beyond the group:

1. ***Inside the Group.*** Each group should set up smaller groups within the group for prayer and ministry. The smaller the sub group (3-5) the better. These groups can be informal, put together on the spot, or formal, an ongoing group. They should meet for approximately 10 minutes to share prayer needs and pray. The smaller group will make this a more intimate time and curtail needless travelogue in prayer requests. If you form groups on the spot, you will be able to better include and get to know guests. As the teacher/leader you may want the guests in your group.
2. ***Through the Group.*** Each Group should have a Care or Ministry Leader(s) who presents the ministry opportunities discovered through prayer groups and contacts. This should not be a lengthy recital of prayer needs, but a presentation of ministry opportunities and making assignments. It should include assigning individuals to contact a group member who is absent and organizing the group to take appropriate ministry actions for group members who are *hurting (sick, unemployed, hospitalized, etc.)*.
3. ***Beyond the Group.*** Encourage group members to become aware of ministry opportunities to unreached people in their relational networks. Organize members, as appropriate, to perform acts of kindness to spread Christ's love beyond the group. Share stories of ministry that takes place and makes positive impact.

Many groups already have a system of Care Ministry and Prayer Ministry. This is commendable! However, many groups spend more time in prayer requests rather than in prayer and in discussing ministry needs rather than assigning ministry action. If this is the case for you, it may be time to recalibrate your groups and refocus them on 'why' they should minister to the group.

## **55. Three Ways to Deploy Group Members in Service** by Daniel Edmonds

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Ephesians 2:10 is a verse that gets overshadowed by its predecessor (2:9), but it contains an equally powerful message: "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

You have heard it said, "We are saved to serve" and that is true. However, in recent years we have exchanged "come, let's serve the Lord together" for "come on in and have a seat." People are created to serve and sense that they truly belong when they are serving in and with the group.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Act inside the group, through the group, and beyond the group.

**Inside the Group:** A leader is wise to involve as many people in serving inside the group as possible. Teachers, according to Ephesians 4, are not to do ministry for everyone but to equip everyone for the work of ministry. If a person is given a service to perform during the group time, they are more likely to be present and on-time. If nothing is expected of them, then attendance becomes optional. Think of as many possible tasks that can be done: set-up team member, greeters, care leaders, fellowship leaders, host/hospitality leaders, and so forth. Seek to involve everyone.

**Through the Group:** Hopefully, you will begin to have group members leaving the group to start a new group or to serve in another age group ministry in the church. Groups should consider these people as missionaries serving beyond the group. Seek way to serve these missionaries. It may be serving in their place when they are on vacation or cannot be present. It may be serving them by making provisions for their new ministry. Your missionaries should see their former group as people willing and ready to serve them.

**Beyond the Group:** It is wise for every group to look for service opportunities for members in the church, in the community, in the city, and beyond. Mission service projects tend to unify the group and focus it on being a Great Commandment/Great Commission ministry. Look where group members go and are engaged beyond the group, are there ways the group can serve in those areas? For example, if group members have children that are involved in a recreational sports league, how might your group serve and minister to others who are involved. The Great Commission reminds us to make disciples as we go and wherever we go. So, go and serve.

## 56. Three Steps to Determine Needs by Daniel Edmonds

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** The Bible has numerous “one another passages” which include “love one another” and “be kind to one another,” and the Bible admonishes us to be of the same mind (mind of Christ). To love one another, we need to know one another, so we can be kind and respectful of one another.

In a group Bible Study, you are not teaching a lesson rather you are teaching people. Therefore, a wise leader gets to know the needs of the people to minister them to and teach them the Bible. Also, through a better knowledge of the people you will be able to match their gifts and abilities to needs in and beyond the group. Keep in mind that your group is attached to a larger group (the church) and should be responsive to all needs.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Make plans to interview, involve, and invest.

- **Interview Leaders:** Your group will be healthier when it is connected to the larger group. You are not trying to create community apart from the church, but to better serve the church. Interview leaders to determine the needs and goals of the church. Discuss how your group can be a part of meeting these needs and working toward the goals.
- **Involve the Group:** Your group members may have several unmet needs as well. They may desire greater fellowship, more involvement in missions, or more effective ministry. Too many times leaders develop tunnel vision (I'm here to teach) and fail to focus on group health. Teachers do need to discern how to "speak the truth in love," but Ephesians 4 reminds leaders that this is done to strengthen the body so it "grows and builds itself up in love." Growth comes from knowledge and application.
- **Invest in Members:** Sometimes individuals will not share in a group those things that are personal. Occasionally a member leaves the group because the basic needs of belonging or serving were not met. Leaders must invest time in getting to know group members on a personal level. It is important to know where they are on their spiritual journey and in their personal life. Not all needs can be met, but they should have a true experience of "one another" living.

When needs are discovered on all levels, then the leader can guide the group toward goal setting.

## 57. Keys to Setting Goals by Tim S. Smith

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** If your Sunday School class is dying it could be because that is your goal! You say, "That would never be my goal!" but if you don't have a clearly stated set of goals then you have no real direction or purpose and "where there is no vision the people perish."

You need to have goals set for your class.

- When you set goals for or with your Sunday School class it provides you with a tool to measure your progress toward your mission or purpose.
- When you have goals set for your class and the group is working toward those goals it moves them toward real Christian fellowship.
- When you have goals and you are evaluating the progress (or lack of it) toward those goals, it makes you aware of the areas that need attention and a little more effort.
- When you have goals, you need to remember that its ok to make some mid-course corrections. The only thing written in stone is our mission (Matthew 28:18-20)

**WHAT DO I DO?** Bring your class together for a goal setting session. Remind them of the purpose, for my class its “teach the Bible for changed lives, share the good news of Jesus to reach the lost and care for people through prayer, ministry and fellowship.” In my situation, we would set goals for three specific areas: teach, share and care. You let your group help is setting the goals for your class. My suggestion for my group would be something like this...

1. **TEACH** – each week we will have at least 3 members; other than the teacher, involved in leading the Bible study session.
2. **SHARE** – each week we will report that we shared the Gospel with at least 10 lost people.
3. **CARE** – each week we will call and pray for every member of our group.

## **58. Three Ways to Commission New Groups** by Daniel Edmonds

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** The Great Commission calls for us to make disciples. From Jesus’ follow me example, we know relationships are a key factor in disciple-making and that relationships are built in small groups. So why is it important to commission new groups? If we are going to follow the model of our Master, we will commission leaders and groups to create new groups of disciples.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Launch one of these groups:

- **Come and See Groups:** One way to create new groups is to commission group members to start a group in their home. The focus of the group would be to invite neighbors to ‘come and see’ or come and explore the claims of Christ. In Acts 2, the church went from house to house “breaking bread,” “praising God,” and “enjoying the favor of all the people.” In recent days, churches have experienced revival through evangelistic home groups that connect people to Christ and to His church. Some churches have commissioned or challenged class members to start a Backyard Kids Club to reach families. Don’t miss the opportunity to challenge your group to be on mission by commissioning groups in their communities.
- **Follow Me Groups:** Groups should be aware of people who have never attended a group or have dropped out of church or groups because of some type of ‘disconnect’ from others. Some leaders create a ‘paper class or group’ from a list of church members and community members who are not in a group. Many of these people need someone to invite them to “follow me.” There a numerous people not in groups because they attended and did not find anyone who tried to intentionally connect with them. Help your group members discover people who would follow them into a new group.

- ***Be Fruitful and Multiply Groups:*** Every group should be challenged to develop new leaders to commission a new group every 12 – 24 months. The Great Commission is a reminder of the first words God said to mankind, “be fruitful and multiply.” Disciples have been recreated by Christ in the image of the Creator who expects them to be fruitful and multiply. Groups should create new groups. When you launch a new group, do so with the commission to be “fruitful (grow in faithful obedience) and multiply (grow in number).”

Each time one of these groups are launched, conduct a commissioning service to celebrate!

## **59. Three Ways to Celebrate New Leaders** by Daniel Edmonds

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Paul instructed Timothy to take what he had learned from Paul and pass it on to others who would do likewise. Leaders are needed to raise up laborers and become leaders to raise up others. When you cease to raise up leaders, you are only a generation away from extinction. Celebration encourages existing and new leaders.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Consider these ways to celebrate:

**Inside the Group.** Every leader in every group should be challenged to have an apprentice. They should disciple the apprentice to develop spiritually and to develop the skills necessary for ministry. They should give the apprentice opportunities to serve in their presence and should celebrate the day they are ready to step out on their own. When Jesus (Luke 9 and 10) experienced His disciples making disciples He rejoiced in the Spirit and praised the Father (10:21). When leaders raise up leaders in your group, celebrate!

**Before other Groups.** Many churches have a recognition service or an appreciation banquet for leaders. Celebrate new leaders and the individual(s) that mentored them during this event. If you want to quit begging for leaders, start celebrating when leaders multiply! Calendar an appreciation event this year!

**Before the Church.** Affirm and recognize new leaders in front of your congregation. You want others to get to know new leaders, and you want to inspire members to become leaders. Celebrate the new leader by having the mentor stand with them. This is a reminder for all leaders to develop an apprentice into a new leader.

## **60. Three Reasons to Celebrate Success** by Daniel Edmonds

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Many football coaches invoke the “24-hour rule” following a victory. They don’t want players to get stuck in the past, but at the same time, accomplishments must be recognized and celebrated. Celebrating success is a key to future victory.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Consider what celebration brings to the table:

### **REASON #1 – Celebration Leads to Motivation**

When you celebrate individual achievements or group accomplishments, people are drawn toward those successes. They can see themselves accomplishing the same task or being a part of the team that achieves the next victory.

For example, if you want more people involved in outreach, then you must recognize those who are involved. Ask these individuals to share the joy they have in reaching out to others. Allow them to share the victories they experience and the personal satisfaction that comes from obedience. On a personal level, this can become very motivating. Hearing the stories of others is a motivation to get involved and create a personal story.

Celebration is as simple as, recognizing those who are leading in various areas. It underscores the importance of the ministry and then their testimonies will motivate others.

### **REASON #2 – Celebration Leads to Mobilization**

The story of one Sunday School teacher proves this point. One day, he was obviously pleased with the number of people present. When called on by the class leader, the teacher began to celebrate the growing attendance of the class. He said, “Doesn’t this feel good? Look how many people are here today. A few of you remember that only a year ago we started with four people. Now the room is comfortably full. Shouldn’t everyone have the experience of being in a group like this?” As class members expressed their joy, he followed through by saying, “Then it is time to do this again! This afternoon in our class meeting, we will begin mobilizing to start a new group. It is up to us to create opportunities for others to experience this joy. I look forward to our meeting this afternoon.”

### **REASON #3 – Celebration Leads to Multiplication**

Celebration through commissioning new leaders or new groups becomes a visual reminder to others that we are here to “be fruitful and multiply.” Celebration by

posting pictures of new leaders and groups on an “our missionaries” bulletin board will serve as a constant reminder that members are to grow and go to make disciples.

## **61. Three Reasons to Have a Group Mission Board** by Daniel Edmonds

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** A Missionary Board is a bulletin board or wall space dedicated to keeping the group focused on “why” we are here. It usually contains pictures that remind participants of the mission and ongoing purpose of the group.

### **WHAT DO I DO?**

1. *Celebration of Mission Engagement.* Posting pictures of the latest mission project or photos of group members ministering in other areas of the church serves as an ongoing celebration of the true purpose of any group – Great Commandment/Great Commission engagement. The pictorial celebration of these events encourages the people in the photo and challenges others to be involved. The photos can also inspire more ideas of mission opportunities in the community.
2. *Care for Missionaries.* Posting photos of people who have left the group to serve in other groups or areas of ministry, reminds group members of their responsibility to provide ongoing care and assistance to these missionaries. One of the difficulties of stepping out to serve, is the feeling of loss that comes from departing the group. Group members should strive to continue in friendship and fellowship with all who serve so they will know they are still valued person in the group.
3. *Change the Culture.* What you value is visible and vocal. There are plenty of grandparents that can show pictures and talk endlessly about their grandchildren. Why? Because they are treasures of great value. By developing a Mission Board, the group makes visible what they value. It also creates opportunities to talk about the importance of growing and going as a group on mission for Christ. When people walk into the meeting place of the group, they should be able to quickly access the community culture by seeing and hearing about those who matter most. A Mission Board will become a valuable tool to change the culture of the group from ‘meeting’ to ‘mission.’

## **62. Eight Reasons to Engage Locally and Globally** by John and Cindy Thomas

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Classes need missions just as missions need our classes to respond, not just by giving and praying for, but by going together. We know that we get to know each other better outside the classroom. We also know that we need to be

visible in our world. We are all familiar with the great commission but often fail to apply that to a class or group.

**WHAT DO I DO?** There are many reasons why a class should be involved in local and international mission projects. Some are obvious others perhaps not as obvious.

- People need help
- Class members have a deep desire to help
- People need a Savior
- Class members understand this need and know how to meet it
- Our communities need a Christian influence
- Class members can be this positive influence and help by ministering locally
- Class members grow together as we serve together
- Class members are fulfilled when they serve and use their spiritual gifts

We have been involved in mission projects with our classes and know the benefits that await those that get involved. Often we can get prospects involved in projects because of their skill set. We get to know them in a neutral setting and possibly win the right to share the gospel. God blesses obedience and faithfulness. With what project do you think your class would get involved? The opportunities are limitless and there are members of your class that would love to take the lead and take care of the details. We just need to challenge them and give them the opportunity.

## **PART SEVEN: LEADER DEVELOPMENT**

### 63. Visit a Different Sunday School Class by David Bond

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** One of the interesting parts of serving on a state convention staff is the opportunity to visit many churches during the year. Seeing what others provides new ideas, sharpens evaluation skills, encourages critical thinking development, and reminds what it is like to be a guest. Visiting a Sunday School class other than your own can be a great way to improve.

Everyone can benefit from a fresh perspective. Visiting a different class can help leaders break out of their routine and be encouraged to try something new.

#### WHAT DO I DO?

- *Pick a date.* Try to visit a class during a “normal” Sunday (not a holiday weekend or special emphasis day). The idea is to see what happens in the group during a typical gathering.
- *Have a plan.* Create a checklist of what you want to pay attention to, such as how the class begins, how they handle praying together, how members participate in the lesson time, and other items of interest to you.
- *Note the time.* Keep a log of how time is spent in class: what time did they begin? How much time is spent on the teaching time? How much time spent for prayer or other activities?
- *Reflect.* Take some time to think back through your experience. What were some positive takeaways? What were some noticeable critiques? What can you learn about your own class?
- *Resolve.* Commit to try one new approach in your own class the next week!

### 64. Attend a Training Conference by David Bond

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** A commitment to lifelong learning helps good leaders maintain effectiveness over a long period of time. A training conference will broaden your perspective beyond your own church and community. Attending a conference will connect you personally with others who share your call to leading Sunday School in your age group.

Training conferences provide you with a forum to ask questions, receive advice, discover resources, share ideas, and enhance skills...all in a conversational, relational environment that can't be duplicated through any other medium.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Find a conference...regional, state, and national conferences are available for training. If none is available nearby, consider working to host a conference at your church. Good training conferences need not be complicated nor expensive.

- Don't go alone...the more people on your team who will share the experience, the better!
- Be fully engaged...attend all sessions, take notes, ask questions,
- Schedule some time as soon as possible to sit down with other leaders and make application to your class or church
- Identify and implement one change because of your training...small changes have a big impact!

## **65. Learn More about the Skill of Writing/Asking Good**

### **Questions** by Steve McNeil

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Several years ago I was introduced to a new skill. I had no idea about the impact that this training would have on my life, my teaching, my group leading, and my relationships with people. This skill is coaching. Oh, not the kind that you see in a football, basketball or baseball game. This skill teaches a person the disciplines of listening and asking good questions.

**WHAT DO I DO?** What I have found is that learning these 2 disciplines can also help someone to be a better teacher. It isn't the teaching where you download a bunch of information from you the teacher to the student. It is a way to help the student discover truth and wrestle with God's Word for themselves.

Asking good questions involves these adjustments:

- Learning to ask instead of tell.
- Seeking to help the student discover for themselves instead of you giving them the right information.
- Learning to ask open-ended questions. Simply put, if you ask a question and someone can answer with yes or no, you have asked a close-ended question.
- Asking questions with how, or what if, or describe for me.

The point is to ask questions that cause the student to have to describe their answer rather than give you the facts. When you are using this skill in your teaching, be sure to prepare by writing out your questions beforehand and ask the question to yourself and think about how you would answer that question. If your answer is yes or no, go back and try again. Happy asking!

## 66. Read Through the Gospels by David Bond

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** One of the key Bible texts that has been used to describe the ministry of Sunday School is Matthew 9:35.

*Then Jesus went to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. (HCSB)*

In these verses, we see Jesus focused on three essential actions that should be present in any Sunday School group: Reaching, Teaching, and Ministering. The great majority of verses found in the gospels on the life of Jesus can be placed under one of those categories.

Reading through the gospels gives leaders a great opportunity to focus on engaging people the way that Jesus did. A focused reading of the gospels helps identify key principles that shape the way Sunday School groups share the gospel, teach for obedience, and meet needs.

### WHAT DO I DO?

- Select a Bible reading plan that challenges you to read through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in a focused period (30-60 days).
- Create a method to write down the verses, stories, and references that show Jesus reaching the lost, teaching His followers, or ministering to someone in need.
- Reflect on each of these categories (Reaching, Teaching, Ministering) for ways they relate to your Sunday School group.
- Identify some specific ways in your class might improve in each category of ministry.
- Discuss with other leaders and share ideas on how to implement needed changes.

## 67. Add a New Teaching Method This Week by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Jesus is our example. He used a variety of teaching methods on purpose. Message and context make a lot of difference.

The same is true today. Group members learn in a variety of ways. When we use teaching methods that address their preferred learning styles, their attention and retention increase. Both are essential for us to be effective in “teaching them to obey” (Matthew 28:20). In addition, some methods just naturally communicate the truth of God’s Word best.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Allow me to share some practical steps out of my experience:

1. Discover your own learning styles by taking an inventory. Search the web for these three samples: *Learning Style Inventory*, *Got Style*, and *Learning Style Inventory*.
2. Allow class time for your group to take an inventory. (Print copies of one.)
3. After class, look through the results. Identify the top 2 learning style preferences for each person. Expect a lot of variety. Compare their styles with yours.
4. Prepare to add one new method (which address their learning styles) to your normal routine.
5. To choose wisely, consider which method best communicates the truth of God's Word to learners with their preferred learning styles. (Good curriculum will offer many choices of methods.)
6. Plan to use the "new" method in small doses (maybe 5 minutes) each week for a month to watch for response and build acceptance.
7. Then try a "new" method the next month and two new methods in the third month. Increase amount of time for methods receiving the most positive response.

## **68. Use a Teaching Method Different from Your Natural Preference** by Mark Miller

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Most teachers will teach the same way this Sunday that they taught last Sunday. They will teach the same way the next Sunday that they taught this Sunday. Why? Because that's how they were taught.

But how did Jesus teach? Did he teach the same way every time? What kinds of methods did Jesus use? Shouldn't all of us want to teach the way that Jesus taught?

**WHAT DO I DO?** Intentionally plan a lesson each month using a teaching method different from your natural preference. Consider studying these three topics:

1. *Examine how Jesus taught.* As you read the Gospels, identify the methods that Jesus used. Bruce Wilkinson in *Teaching the Jesus Way* said that when he determined that Jesus rarely used the same method. His teaching was different every time based on the outcome that he desired and the audience that he taught.
2. *Study how people learn.* Most groups will have people who prefer to learn differently from how the teacher teaches. The Eight Learning Approaches are: Physical, Verbal, Visual, Musical, Natural, Relational, Logical, and Reflective.
3. *Read a book on teaching.* Your teaching style will determine the likely learning outcome of your lesson. A good book is *TEACHER: Creating Conversational Communities*.

My favorite definition of teaching is: Teaching is creating an experience in which a person changes in some lasting way his in knowledge, understanding, attitude, skills or values. Get creative and teach a lesson each month different from your natural teaching preference!

## **69. Learn a New Gospel Presentation, Share with Your Class** by

Clint Calvert

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Learning and sharing a new gospel presentation is important for the leader, for people hearing the gospel, and for the leader's class. The leader, as a Christ follower, needs to share the gospel to be obedient to the Great Commission. The leader needs to become acquainted and proficient with ways of sharing the gospel that will be heard in the hearer's context.

Decreasing biblical literacy and religious skepticism have created an environment where new ways of sharing the good news are needed. The class needs examples from leaders who are growing in their capacity to share the gospel and with the encouragement that this is something they can do as well.

**WHAT DO I DO?** I recommend learning the "Three Circles: Life Conversation Guide." The Three Circles is largely devoid of church language. And when biblical terms are used they are well explained.

This gospel presentation has sufficient training resources for the leader to learn it's language and sequence. The North American Mission Board hosts online training for the method here: <https://www.namb.net/video/3-circles-life-conversation-guide>. In addition, a smartphone app for iPhone and Android is available to assist both presenters and hearers.

LifeWay has produced a five-week resource for training a class in sharing the method called: "Life on Mission: A Simple Way to Share the Gospel." Ultimately class members will find inspiration in the example of a class leader who will "go first" by learning and sharing a new gospel presentation.

## **70. Gather Your Class for Evaluation of Strengths and Needs** by

Steve McNeil

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** In the book, *One Hundred*, David Francis writes that "the purpose of this book is to provoke conversations about the 100 little things that can be done better." Conversations allow people to think and process thoughts. The

opportunity to process thoughts through conversation can bring people a sense of agreement about actions that produce incremental positive changes in the life of a church.

One key ingredient to make this happen is for the leaders of the group to do regular and effective evaluation of their practices. Remember the cliché definition of insanity is “to do the same thing the same way and expect different results.” *One Hundred* gives measurements and principles to evaluate against.

**WHAT DO I DO?** How do effective Sunday School/small group leaders evaluate their work?

1. Prayerfully seek to establish a culture of evaluation. This isn't criticism time as much as an honest look at what has been done well and what needs to be done better. Ask the question, “can we talk openly and honestly about this emphasis, or this event, or a system in the group and not get personal about people, but talk about how to make our group a better place to see life transformation and see the multiplication of leaders and disciples?”
2. Gather your team either on a regular basis (monthly, quarterly) to look intentionally at what your group is doing, how you are doing, what is going well, and what improvements can be made. Remember to schedule time after events or special emphases to do the same.
3. Make a list of the good things that the group is doing. Share those with the group. Celebrate!
4. Intentionally talk about needs of the group and needs of the community and ways the group might prayerfully get involved.
5. Once you are having these open and honest conversations about group effectiveness, begin to establish priorities for the group. These also act as accountability measurements for the group.
6. Make the evaluation time and process one of prayer and seeking what God's Spirit wants to accomplish with your group.

Evaluation can be a tough practice for people who are overly sensitive or territorial. That makes it very important to spend time as a leadership group praying about your group and their needs. Dependence on God's Spirit is critical. Work at building a loving, trusting atmosphere.

What your group is doing is important enough for you to be intentional about evaluating your work!

## **PART EIGHT: MAKING DISCIPLES**

## 71. Three Steps to Leading Your Members to Read Their Bible Daily by Jeff Musgrave

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** We all know the importance of reading the Bible. It is our only offensive weapon in the spiritual war we engage in daily. When Jesus was tempted, He used the Word as his response each time. But you should know it to use it. Here are three steps to use in building a habit of daily Bible reading.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Consider these ideas:

1. *Have a planned time.* Set aside a specific time daily for reading. It doesn't have to be a time on the clock either. It can be tied to something else you do every day. Choose to read right after breakfast or right before bed. I am an advocate of reading in the morning (even though I am not a morning person by any means). Pick a time and stick to it.
2. *Have a planned text.* There are reading plans of all sorts out there to help people choose what to read each day. I always encourage people to start with a chapter of Proverbs each day. There are 31 chapters and you can read whatever chapter corresponds to the day of the month. When you get through them all, it is OK to read them again. There is a lot of wisdom in Proverbs and you will find that different ones stand out each month as you read.
3. *Have a planned talk.* Ask someone to keep you accountable each day by asking you what you read. We all need a little motivation from time to time.

## 72. Equip Your Members to Share the Gospel by Sean Keith

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Most members of your group have never shared the gospel with anyone. Most of them, wouldn't even know a gospel presentation to use if the opportunity were to arise. And yet in Acts 1:8, Jesus said, "You shall be my witnesses".

**WHAT DO I DO?** Why not equip them with a simple gospel plan? There are lots of choices. There are even apps for your phone that are gospel tracts. There is the Roman Road, the one verse with a bridge illustration, and so many more. Pick one. Here are some ideas you can use to help your class or group learn a gospel presentation.

- Weekly help your members to memorize gospel verses like Romans 3:23, 6:23 and 10:9-10.

- Plan a Sunday to have your members write out their personal testimony. Have them describe their life before they met Christ, how they discovered their need for Christ, and what their life has been like since they met Christ.
- Show them how to use a tract or an app to share the gospel.
- Let them practice on one another.
- Get use to letting people share their testimony in class.
- Show them how to use a marked New Testament.
- Encourage them weekly to pray for lost friends, relatives and neighbors. Challenge them to pray for an opportunity to share the gospel

It takes personal initiative on your part to make this happen. If it's important; talk about it. Sharing our faith is important. Helping people to know how is part of your responsibility.

### **73. Pray for the Lost During Class** by Mark Yoakum

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Most classes each Sunday take time to share prayer requests. Many of these are organ recitals: i.e. "Pray for my kidneys, my liver, my cousin's heart, my sister's cousin who is having a hip replacement, etc."

I often think we *pray harder to keep people out of heaven than to pray for the lost to get them into heaven.*

**WHAT DO I DO?** One youth minister had the audacity to have his youth write the names of lost people they wanted to see be saved on the white board and start praying for them by name each week. One Friday night, the father of one youth came to his son's fifth-quarter youth activity after the local football game. He was very persistent that he had to talk to the youth minister right then. He had been restless and troubled for two weeks and had to get some answers.

As they went off to one of the youth classrooms, they sat down and the father asked why his name was written on the white board. The youth minister said that for the last three weeks, the students in his son's class had been praying for the father by name that he might come to know Jesus.

The man exploded. "That explains it. I have not been able to sleep or concentrate on anything the last couple of weeks." In that room that night, the man gave his heart to Jesus. Prayer changes things. We are in a spiritual battle over the souls of men.

### **74. Pray for the Lost by Sharing Your List** by Sean Keith

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Your group regularly prays for the needs of the members and their family and friends, but are you praying for the lost in your family, among your friends, and in your community? We pray for what is important to us. What did Jesus pray for? Yes, He prayed for His family and friends. But Jesus prayed to God that He would follow His will and not His own. Jesus was sent to this earth to redeem the lost. He came to “seek and save the lost.” (HCSB Luke 19:10)

Praying for the lost is a critical step in developing a love for the lost just like Jesus. Our purpose on this earth as believers is not to make our lives more comfortable, but to accomplish the will of the Father. His desire is that the lost would hear the Gospel. For that to happen, God must transform the heart of the believer (us) and prepare the heart of the lost. A regular time of prayer for the lost will help make that happen.

**WHAT DO I DO?** May I make a suggestion? Let me encourage you to write down the names of three lost people that you know. Commit to pray daily that God would prepare their heart for the message of the Gospel and prepare your life to possibly be the one to share that Good News with them.

Also, share the names of those you are praying for with your small group or Sunday School class. Imagine the celebration in heaven and in your class if one of those people comes to know Christ. I would say that would be a great and wise investment of your time. Wouldn't you?

## **75. Pray for One Another** by Roger Byrd

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Every believer should know that prayer is vital to the Christian life and necessary to access the mind of Christ and experience the activity of God. Without daily prayer, we choose to live without being connected to God and His voice. Then the good things we do end up being done at the wrong time or the wrong reasons.

There is nothing more affirming and comforting in life than to know that friends are praying for you. Each person in your group has a private list of concerns to be lifted to God for direction, comfort and strength. Each lost person in your class needs to know Christ and the forgiveness and joy He alone can give. We need to pray for each other.

**WHAT DO I DO?** The most effective way to remember to pray for someone is to listen and understand their need and attach your heart to their situation. The better you know them, the more effective your prayers can be. That's why the group is so important to a Christian's growth in Christ.

Help your class pray for one another by choosing to do several of these things:

- Choose prayer partners.
- Write down prayer requests.
- Share prayer needs on your group's Facebook page.
- Stop to pray when you remember someone's request.
- Hand out prayer reminder cards during class.
- Spend time praying during the class session.
- As the leader, let them hear you pray for them by name.

Use your creativity to think of more ways to pray for one another.

And keep on praying.

## 76. Help Your Members Discover Their Spiritual Gifts by Sandy Coelho

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** As a follower of Jesus, exploring and exercising our spiritual gifts is a vital and exciting part of our spiritual journey. Paul writes, "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord." (1 Corinthians 12:4 NIV).

**WHAT DO I DO?** Here are some ideas:

- **Teach.** Small groups are a wonderful place to help members to discover, explore and put into practice their spiritual gifts. You might consider taking time to do a study with the whole group to learn about spiritual gifts and how they really do work among the body especially in your local context. Even if some of your participants know about the gifts they can really help to give first-hand testimony about their own gifts and how they have used them for the benefit of the local body and beyond.
- **Inventory.** Once you have done some teaching on spiritual gifts, it really is important to be sure to have them do a spiritual gifts inventory. There are many spiritual gifts inventory tools on-line for free. Be consistent and choose one so that everyone is using the same list and definitions of spiritual gifts. Once everyone has completed the inventory, spend some quality time debriefing the results and give time for questions and further exploration.
- **Utilize.** It is now time to help participants launch and use their gifts. It is important that, as a leader, you help facilitate opportunities for your group members to begin to utilize these precious gifts they have discovered. Try and pair them with other

believers who can walk with them in becoming a full partner in ministry as they learn to discover the joys of using their spiritual gifts.

## 77. Three Ways to Challenge Members to Develop Spiritual Disciplines by Jeff Musgrave

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Paul reminded Timothy to “train for godliness” because it has value in every way. Training requires discipline, but discipline isn’t a pleasant word for most of us. The Christian life demands that we be disciplined if we want to grow.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Here are some tips to get started:

1. **Start small.** The easiest way to get overwhelmed is to try and do too much at once. Pick one spiritual discipline and work on that first. Make time for a daily devotion or prayer time perhaps.
2. **Be accountable.** Just as most people do better at physical training when they have a trainer to help keep them on task and going, a spiritual trainer can help keep us stay disciplined in our spiritual activity.
3. **Track your growth.** Consider keeping a journal or record of your activity with spiritual disciplines and recording what God is doing in your life through them. Keep a prayer journal with prayers you have prayed and answers God has given for instance.

Most of all, don’t give up. If you fail, start again. Spiritual disciplines aren’t easy, but they are worth the effort.

## 78. Three Things Every Member Needs to Live on Mission by Bob Mayfield

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** The real goal of a Sunday School teacher is not to develop a fan club but to develop fanatics that serve others in the name of Jesus. This was Jesus’ mission as well: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life – a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

**WHAT DO I DO?** So how does a Sunday School teacher lead his or her group to follow Jesus and live on mission to serve others? Here are three simple things that the people in your group need from their group leader:

- 1) **Your Permission.** If you have been a church leader long, you have heard a church member mention that they might need permission from the church to do something. This practice can create an atmosphere that ministry has to be done in the church building. However, there is a difference between requesting a room at the church facility for a group activity, and serving others in the name of Jesus. As the leader, do not insist that ministry activities have to have your permission first. Instead, teach your group that living on mission takes place outside of group meetings and church facilities.
- 2) **Your Example.** Share personal examples of living on mission with the group. People learn from and model their leader's examples. Also, teach missional living examples that are part of the group Bible studies. Philip did not ask for permission to serve the Ethiopian official and lead him to Christ in Acts 8! If the opportunity arises, take a group member with you when to missional opportunities where you are involved.
- 3) **Your Encouragement.** Celebrate as a group when a group member lives missionally! Organize your group to do a mission project together. Pray for group members to be aware of the Holy Spirit leading them to serve others.

## 79. What to Know to Grow Spiritually by Sean Keith

<sup>15</sup> *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who doesn't need to be ashamed, correctly teaching the word of truth.* **2 Timothy 2:15 (HCSB)**

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Growth is a natural byproduct of all living things. If we are not growing; we are dying. The very nature of the walk of a disciple of Christ is to be growing in His likeness. We are to know the truth, understand how it applies to our lives, and daily live like Him every day. That takes commitment, sacrifice, and discipline.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Naturally, the first thing we need to do as leaders is "die to self." To live for Christ, I must daily die to myself. (Luke 9:23, Galatians 2:20) Secondly, I need to depend upon and trust in God and God alone. (Philippians 4:19) Thirdly, I must practice spiritual disciplines regularly that will provide the context for growth. We need to participate daily in things like prayer, Bible reading, sharing the gospel, ministering to the needs of others, participating and attending church, tithing, service projects, mission projects, and so much more.

As you make disciples through your leading and teaching, those who follow you need to see a “live” demonstration or model of a disciplined, authentic, and imperfect follower of Christ. The greatest asset of an effective leader is a growing, dynamic, and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. As the saying goes, “The only Jesus some will ever see, the only Bible some will ever read, is the one in you and me.”

## **PART NINE: USE CLASSROOM SPACE WELL**

## 80. The 3 Best Things to Improve Your Preschool Classroom by Jenni Carter

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** When a new young family visits your church, one of the first areas they notice is the Preschool Classroom. What does the class say to these guests – Cluttered and Neglected or Clean and Inviting?

**WHAT DO I DO?** Take the following actions:

1. ***Declutter! Declutter! Declutter!*** Every Preschool leader knows we need a lot of “stuff” to teach. However, we don’t need it all at once. The only things that need to be out or on the walls are those that relate to the lesson that day. Take some time to clean up and make use of your Resource Room to put away items that you don’t use each week.
2. ***Use color wisely.*** Paint the walls a neutral color and consider having one focal wall painted a jewel tone. You might also consider painting the door frame the same color as the focal wall to give some visual interest in the hall. Too much color can lead to hyperactivity, too little color may make the area seem too institutional or uninviting.
3. ***Have a happy, smiling face greeting families at the Preschool classroom door.*** The Preschool teacher sets the tone for the class. The teacher should be calm, smiling, and consistent. Preschoolers and their parents need to know that the Preschool leaders will be in the classroom waiting for the child. The leader needs to be on time, consistent, prepared, and ready to lead the session.

## 81. Top 5 Things Needed in Every Children’s Classroom by Maria Brannen

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** *“...And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down and when you rise.” Deuteronomy 6:6-8. (ESV)*

To partner effectively with parents, we must intentionally maximize our impact in the time we have with kids at church.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Here are 5 things that are needed in every children’s classroom at church:

1. *Trained teachers who have a love for Christ and kids.* Offering training and resources for children's teachers will equip them to help lay intentional spiritual foundations and to share their faith with the Kids.
2. *The Bible.* Children are concrete learners. When we are intentional in having children use their Bibles in class each week, it reinforces the importance of God's Word and helps to develop Bible Skills and a love for scripture.
3. *Kids.* If we are to reach the next generation, our church needs to have a heart for kids and their families. We need to seek ways to plug into the community and develop relationships with young families.
4. *An intentional plan to teach about Jesus.* As a church, we need to wisely choose curriculum for our classrooms that is age appropriate and lays Biblical foundations in the lives of our kids.
5. *A plan to connect and partner with parents/family.* Communicate what you are teaching each week as well as recommend resources that can be used at home.

*Redeem the Time* (Ephesians 5:16)

## **82. What Every Student Needs in Their Sunday School**

**Classroom** by Dwayne Lee

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** The Bible conveys to us that we have been made creatures have need relationships. I know that many might disagree with that statement, but it the core of our being I believe we all desire community.

Certainly, there are those moments when we all look for that time of peace, quiet and solitude. I look for that myself, but at the end of the day we need relationships. We need people in our lives that can be there in the good times and in the bad. Your small group or Sunday school class is a great place for that to happen.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Community begins to take place when you do things outside of the classroom or group time. Too many times we simply go to church, go to our class, listen to the lesson, move into the worship time, get into our cars and go home without communicating with anyone.

I'm not talking about the casual "hello" or "How is it going?" I'm talking about connecting with people you are doing life with. My wife and I have made connection with a couple in our group and every week we are together we always talk about the next time we are getting together to grab a burger! Then it's at the restaurant we can really begin to laugh, share, pray and enjoy each other's journey and hear what God is doing in their lives.

Make the effort to start (or continue) those relationships within your group and see how God will use that to spark new opportunities.

*Hebrews 10:25-25:* “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

## **83. Three Things Young Adults Look for in Their Sunday**

**School Class** by Lance Crowell

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Many today are asking the question, “Where are all the young adults?” They have become a completely missing demographic for a host of churches. If we want to continue to be salt and light in the culture for generations to come, reaching and developing today’s young adults becomes paramount.

**WHAT DO I DO?** There are some key focal points ministries can use to orient their efforts in reaching and engaging young adults. It’s not about the bells and whistles, but about building a firm foundation to connect and disciple them.

- **Content.** Young adults are looking to be challenged and hear the truth. They need robust discussion which does not gloss over difficult issues of life. Especially in a culture moving farther and farther away from Judeo-Christian principles. Teach the word to them and teach them to love the word. In addition, find out where they are and slowly raise the bar.
- **Community.** Young adults are often very lonely and desperately looking for relationships. Churches which retain them provide environments which facilitate and encourage lasting friendships. Authentic community is a scarcity for so many in the world today. However, the body of Christ is the one place where people can find lasting accountability, edification, and unconditional love.
- **Calling.** Many young adults desire to be part of something larger than they are. When churches reach the community and make an authentic difference for the gospel in the world, it provides a compelling place for them to invest. Talk often about the mission and provide regular opportunities to impact the world around them for the cause of Christ.

## **84. What to Do in Your Classroom to Reach More People** by

Dwayne Lee

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Many church leaders have said jokingly, “Ministry would be fun if it was not for people...” But the fact is that “there would be no ministry if it were not for people!”

For too long our Sunday school groups have been inwardly focused, social clubs, or cliques (yes, I said it). One of the main purposes when Sunday school was established was reaching out to bring in other people. Jesus Himself said, “Go out into the highways, and hedges and compel them to come in...”

**WHAT DO I DO?** What is ONE thing your class or group could do to reach more people? Here is my one thing: Pray!

What do I mean when I say pray? Let’s call people out by name! David Francis, Director of Sunday School for Lifeway Christian Resources reminded us in one of his “Franciscan epistles” that a class becomes a little more of a community when members of the class start praying for people by name.

Most of our classes have prayer time built into their group, but seldom when I sit in classes do I hear lost peoples’ names mentioned. Is it because we do not know any lost people? I’m sure that is not the case.

We are surrounded by lost people all the time, so start thinking about the one (or three) people you could pray for this coming Sunday.

*Romans 10:1:* “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.”

## **85. The 5 Biggest Mistakes Churches Make in Classroom**

**Design** by Tim S. Smith

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** I’ve seen more than five mistakes so this will not be an exhaustive list of things to avoid or include in the design of your new education space. I wish there were only five mistakes so we could easily make those corrections but life is not that easy. It can also be different for the various age groups that meet in the education space but here are the top five issues I’ve seen in recent years.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Consider these common potential mistakes:

1. Too many churches have been guilty neglecting preschool, children and youth space. They’ve provided for the adults and they’ve taken care of the older adults but

fail to provide the best space for the next generation. I told someone last week, “I always want to be part of a church that is for the next generation.” So put my class or group in the worst space but make sure that my kids and grandkids have the best!

2. Churches need space for moving people and gathering for non-official fellowship time. When they design their buildings, they don’t provide hallways that are wide enough nor do they include spaces for gathering prior to, during or following small group and worship experiences.
3. Yes, we are spoiled and we would have time making in other places around the world but we like our modern-day conveniences. Don’t go cheap when it comes to HVAC! I always recommend that churches include both a supply line as well as a return line in every classroom. Also make sure you include technology such as Wi-Fi, video and audio.
4. Another big mistake is when churches break what I call the “1 for 2” rule. That is when they design a classroom that becomes a long narrow box. The goal should be for the classrooms to be more like a square than rectangular.
5. When I started in ministry this was not even a thought, but today it’s a different story because it is a different world! When we design our church spaces we need to take very seriously the security issues. In designing space for those under 18, the space needs one way in and it needs to be controlled. Make sure your church has a plan in place for dealing with the various security issues.

## **86. How to Set up Your Classroom to Improve Your Teaching** by

Tim S. Smith

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Why is it important to set up your classroom to improve your teaching? Because the environment of the classroom, including how the room is arranged, has a major impact on learning. A good teacher is equally concerned about the content of their lesson as well as the environment of the classroom.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Here are some ideas that you can use to make sure that your classroom is assisting you in teaching your students.

1. I would encourage you to vary the ways that the chairs are set up in the room. Let the set up assist you in your teaching. The ideal set up is a semi-circle but sometimes it may be needed to arrange the chairs in rows for lecture or in small groups of circles to encourage discussion or an activity.
2. Another important point to remember is to always make sure that the entrance door to the classroom is always at the rear of the classroom. This is to reduce the

possibility of a disturbance from those arriving late or from the activities in the hallway.

3. Because of the influence of technology, most people today are visual learners or their learning is enhanced through visuals. Use a focal wall with the simplest of visuals such as a bulletin board and/or a white board. If possible, a flat screen TV would enhance your teaching through use of video clips, info graphics and slides.
4. The classroom needs plenty of light so make sure there is an appropriate amount of good clean light for the room. Either install new lighting or add some stand-alone type lamps.
5. The comfort of the classroom will also very important. Make sure that the chairs are comfortable and make sure that there is air movement in the room. If the HVAC is not adequate and cannot be corrected, then you may need to use a ceiling or floor fan. If the room is not warm enough it may require a safe floor heater.

## **87. Understanding Square Footage Basics for Sunday School Classrooms** by Tim S. Smith

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** How much water can you put in a gallon bucket? It's not a trick question! How much water can you put in a gallon bucket even if you stand over it for eight hours with the garden hose going full blast? It makes no difference because the answer is the same; a gallon bucket can only hold a gallon of water.

The same is true of the Sunday School classrooms at your church. No matter how hard you work that space is only designed to handle a specific number of people but it does vary from age group to age group. There will be some that disagree on the following recommendations for each age group but it will not differ enough to make a major impact.

**WHAT DO I DO?** In preschool classrooms, the recommendation is 35 square feet per person. In children's classrooms, the recommendation is 25 square feet per person. In youth and adult classrooms, the recommendation is 18 square feet per person. To determine the maximum capacity for your classroom you need to know the square footage of the room. Measure the length of one wall and then multiple that by the lengthen of a connecting wall.

For example, we have a preschool classroom with 350 square feet. We divide the recommended square footage per person (35) into 350 and it gives us our MSSA (maximum Sunday School attendance) of 10. To get an even better grasp on the potential of our classroom we need to discover what that space can average in

attendance. The general rule is 80% so our example classroom should be able to average 8 each week in Sunday School.

## **88. The 3 Most Important Areas in Your Church** by Tim S. Smith

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** What are the three most important areas in your church (other than the worship center and classrooms)? Notice that I said in your church—so that doesn't include the parking lot nor the church sign but those are very important as well! I also excluded the worship space and classrooms but I will make one exception.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Give attention to these three areas:

- **Preschool and Children:** In my opinion, the most important area of your church includes the preschool and children's areas. This will include their classrooms, reception areas, inside play areas, large group/worship space(s), etc. Anything that is for the kids at church needs to be as nice or nicer than the newest daycare and/or elementary school nearest the church. Why? Because that's what is expected.
- **Ladies' Restrooms:** The second most important area at your church is a space I don't visit! It's your ladies' restrooms! Guys are different and we are okay with stuff but women are different. We've stopped going to restaurants because their women's' restrooms were dirty. I don't understand the issue because they're not cooking in there! Make sure your ladies' restrooms are clean and nice.
- **Hallways and Gathering Spaces:** Third on my list are your hallways and gathering spaces. People want and need space to gathering and congregate. That space also needs to be bright and up-to-date. It needs to be clean and well kept. I've always said that you can tell how healthy a church is by how early the people come and by how late they stay. If your church doesn't provide the space for gathering, then it could be a hindrance to the growth of your church.

## **89. Five Ways to Update Your Classroom Without Spending Too Much** by Tim S. Smith

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** "Every barn needs a little paint." It is amazing what can happen when you give even the oldest space a little attention. First impressions are very important and we only get one chance to make a good first impression. The way we dress says a lot about a person. The way your classroom looks says a lot about your group. So what are five simple things you could do to update your classroom without spending too much money?

**WHAT DO I DO?** First, clean it! Take a Saturday morning and have a workday in your classroom. Provide breakfast for the members and clean up your classroom. Throw away anything that is outdated or broke! The things that are in your classroom that you don't use put them in storage. Dust and wipe down the walls, scrub the floors or vacuum the carpet. Don't forget to wash the windows and the window treatments.

Second, install new lighting. You can replace the existing lights or add new ones. Make sure you clean the room before putting in new lights because all the dirt will be seen with new lights.

Third, paint the room. Again, plan a workday and paint the classroom. Check with the appropriate leaders at your church because there may be certain color patterns for your church. Don't pick out a dark color nor do you want to pick out an unusual color. Stay with the basic comfortable colors.

Fourth, hang some new visuals in the classroom. Put up a new white marker board and/or a new bulletin board. Go to the Christian bookstore and get some decorations to hang on the walls. Don't make it too much but just enough to make it look new.

Fifth, purchase some new chairs. Before you say that costs too much go and price nice chairs at the local big box store like Staples, Costco, Sam's, etc. You will be amazed at how new chairs will change the look and comfort of a classroom.

## **PART TEN: ADMINISTER THE CLASS WELL**

## 90. A Calendar Can Improve Group Attendance by Bob Mayfield

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** A calendar may not seem very spiritual, but to be relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, your group must compete with the multiple opportunities that appear on the calendars of church and unchurched people. Americans are affluent people, but that affluence has brought a different kind of poverty – time poverty. Your Sunday School group is competing with Little League, band practice, music lessons, homework, trips to see the grandkids, and weekend trips to the lake. Attendance is no longer something that a church or a Sunday School class can take for granted. Providing a class calendar helps group members make commitments to attend and participate in the life of the group.

**Important:** A calendar helps the group and it helps the teacher because you cannot disciple someone who is not present!

**WHAT DO I DO?** Organize and form a team of group members to plan a group calendar at least three months out, but preferably a full year in advance. Include fellowships and lunches, but plan something special during the Sunday School hour at least once a month and include it on the group's calendar. The monthly event can have a theme such as: Boots 'n Jeans Day or Casserole Sunday. It might include things such as: a special brunch, a special visit from the pastor, or a guest teacher specializing in the topic of today's Bible study.

After the team has developed the group calendar, distribute paper copies to all group members. Next, send an email to all group members so that everyone, including absentees, gets a calendar. Then follow up each month with announcements, emails, and text messages to remind group members of upcoming events.

## 91. Communication Tools to Use with Your Class by Sandy Coelho

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Communication leads to community, an important goal for groups. As the leader, ensure your participants hear from you regularly so they feel connected to the group. This will also help group members keep up with group life when unable to attend, and it also allows you to communicate opportunities of connection beyond the group time.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Today there are many communication options...

- **Handwritten notes:** While some think that this option has gone the way of the dinosaur, many really appreciate the time, effort and sentiment that a note brings. Invest in note cards and stamps. Send out a card or two to group members every week. It really makes an impression.
- **Telephone calls:** This method allows for a two-way conversation that is personal. Calls communicate that you want to hear what is happening in your student's life. Carve out time to make 1 or 2 calls a week, and watch your relationships with students become stronger.
- **Texting:** Find ways to text very short but meaningful texts to your class members to let them know that you are praying for them and to remind them of brief, but important information.
- **Social Media:** This tool could be utilized to facilitate total class interaction. You might use this option for digging deeper into a question from your group time or to share other information relevant to your topic. You can also share information that people might have missed.

There are other ways to communicate, but the key will be practicing them. Find what works best for your group. Mix them up and avoid getting stuck in a rut.

## 92. Use a Class Newsletter by Jonathan Jordan

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** The list of ways to communicate are numerous. The 21st Century has supplied us with numerous ways to communicate valuable information to our group. This information in many cases is quite important to our groups and holds the key to ensure that people are taken care of through prayer and ministry.

This information communicated helps members know how they can minister and what they can do in their group to help others. This gives people in the group "buy-in" so they feel a part of the group and not just attend. Typically, there are events or a "What is Going On" section. You want to make sure the class stays active.

**WHAT DO I DO?** One of the easiest ways to start communicating and maybe the oldest is a Class or Group Newsletter. A newsletter!!! Yes, people still use them and they are quite effective.

Newsletters can be mailed, handed out in class, or sent as a simple "E-Newsletter." You should include contact information for people to get in touch with leaders.

A group mission project should be at the forefront of most any Newsletter. Prayer needs & some sort of upcoming events section always proves to be a good beginning.

People want to know that the group is “valuable” enough for them to be a part of it. Add value to your group, start a newsletter and start communicating!

### **93. How to Set up a Closed Group on Facebook** by Jonathan Jordan

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Many group members are on Facebook. Even though sometimes Facebook is not that great, it can be used as a great ministry tool. It can help us communicate with our class throughout the week. There is a little-known tool that leaders can set up just for your group. It’s called “Groups.” I belong to a ton of Groups and the interests are vast. But as the leader can set up a “group” for your Sunday School class. It can be as private as you would like it and you control who belongs.

**WHAT DO I DO?** If you have a Facebook account look at the top menu. See below:



The small triangle arrow on the right is where you begin. Click the arrow and you will see a dropdown menu. Under this menu you will see “create a group.” Once you click the “create a group” button you can set up the group however you would like.

Just a few “rules of the road” for Groups on Facebook.

- Keep the group “Private” if you are going to be sharing events, details, names, etc. in this group.
- You do not have to be “FB friends” with everyone in the group. You just share “group” space.
- If a person leaves your group, delete them from the group.

You will be able to see the Group on the left-hand side of your page.

### **94. Use Instagram in Your Group** by Jason McNair

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** We are a visual generation. Everyone loves pictures and the growth of Instagram, Snapchat, Vine, and so many other video and photo sharing sites are proof that pictures and videos help get a message across. Whether or not all those messages are worth sharing is up for debate. With the growth of any social media

industry comes danger and we must be cautious in how we embrace new media sharing technologies.

We have a message worth sharing. Week after week, group leaders connect group members to each other and to the timeless message of the truths found in God's word. It's time to redeem Instagram and help connect your group members together by presenting a message worth sharing with the world.

**WHAT DO I DO?** In another article, I shared about the importance of creating a closed Facebook group for your group members. As a group leader, you can link your Instagram posts to this group to help get the message out in creative ways. Remember to make these images and videos "public" if you want them shared beyond your group.

1. **Make a selfie invite video for your next group session:** You may not like selfies, but in time, you will get comfortable with it. You only have 15 seconds, so make it short and to the point.
2. **Create an image teaser post about an upcoming event:** Connecting your group outside of meeting times is a great way to build community within your group.
3. **Post a creative image of the main point or scripture passage from your lesson:** Instagram has filters and the ability to add text to your graphic to get your point across.
4. **Use it to post icebreaker questions that relate (or don't relate) to your next lesson topic:** Use comments below your question during your teaching time to provide personal illustrations.

What would you add to this list? Use the Comment section on our [Sunday School Leader](#) blog to share your additional tips and ideas.

## **95. Nine Reasons to Have an Annual Growth Planning Day** by Mark Miller

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Proverbs 29:18, "where there is no vision the people perish." Certainly, the Sunday School Leadership Team should design a plan to close the gap between where the Sunday School organization is and where they want it to be. But a teacher or group leader should lead their group to learn from the past, better understand the present, and move purposefully toward the future.

**WHAT DO I DO?** My mom taught a Sunday School class for over 50 years. One of the things that I learned from her was the importance of having regular class meetings. As a

teacher, I practice having an annual growth planning day with my group. Here are nine reasons why:

1. Planning gives you the opportunity to solve potential problems.
2. Planning helps the group to be more productive.
3. Planning allows you to celebrate accomplishments.
4. Planning makes growth more likely.
5. Planning enables the anticipation of future needs.
6. Planning helps bring about balance.
7. Planning helps plans become ours rather than theirs.
8. Planning helps make better use of the group giftedness and resources.
9. Planning makes happier members (and leaders).

Dream a big dream. God wants to use your group to see people saved, baptized and developed.

## **96. Reasons to Have an Annual Class Growth Planning Day** by Jonathan Jordan

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** We attend our group each week and many times do the “same ole, same ole.” Our people come each week and often we really don’t have a plan for our class. If the truth was known, I feel that people get bored with their group if there is not a plan, a goal, mission, organization or anything! The idea that our teaching of the lesson is enough for engaging life change for the people of our group is just not true. Christ has called us to more than a “sit and soak” mentality. The mission of our groups is so important to the kingdom there is no way it can be ignored.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Make an announcement one Sunday that in a few weeks that the class will have a Planning Day. Send some emails, put the announcement on your FB Group, send cards whatever it takes to inform people.

Next begin working with a couple of people who are like minded and begin to outline what the class time will look like. The trusted group will assist you in devising a plan for that day that will include enlisted additional leaders, a discussion of mission projects the class can get involved in to help the community. Mission projects for community and those outside the church are more compelling.

Then get ORGANIZED. It is difficult to accomplish anything without being organized – Leaders for Social, Missions (have a mission project every semester), Communications

& Class Calendar need to be addressed. Get out there and do what Christ has called you to do... You'll never be the same!

## 97. Three Goals Which Can Grow Your Class from Inside Out by Jonathan Jordan

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** The question of growth comes up when working with churches on a regular basis. Few really ask the question out loud or would admit they do not intend to grow their church or group. But often the actions they take are counterproductive when it comes to growing their group. In addition to taking actions that are counterproductive, few take actions in their class to assure growth has a chance. The bottom line is that if we are followers of Christ our charge is clear.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Often it only takes a few adjustments to begin to move your class to a posture of growth. This is true not only for numerical but spiritual growth in the hearts and minds of the persons in our group.

1. Your group needs to have a mission project twice per year. Not just an emphasis, but something outside the group and the church. The value of serving those OUTSIDE your organization is invaluable.
2. Your group needs to fellowship once a month. Some sort of gathering or activity. Cookouts are great this time of year! Find something, be creative, but don't underestimate the value of your group having scheduled fellowships every month
3. Everyone needs to be contacted at least 1 time per week. It does not have to be the same person each week or having the same person contact the entire group. People need a text, email, phone call, card—anything as long as they have been contacted.

## 98. Measure and Reward What You Want to Accomplish by Mark Miller

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** What you *believe about* Sunday School (primary purpose; why it exists) determines how you *see* Sunday School (what it is or does). How you see Sunday School determines how you *lead* Sunday School (focus or emphasis) and how you *measure its success*.

**WHAT DO I DO?** Which of these purposes is most descriptive of your group?

1. If the primary purpose of Sunday School is *teaching*, then you will see Sunday School primarily as a group with members primarily as students. You will

emphasize attending the study event. The key measures of success will be how many show up and did we get through the lesson.

2. If the primary purpose of Sunday School is *friendship and fellowship*, then your focus will be on community. You will lead your Sunday School to establish and build relationships. The key measure of success will be having a good group experience.
3. If the primary purpose of Sunday School is *care and support*, then you will focus on service and helping with your members as ministers. You will emphasize praying for each other and supporting each other. The key measure of success will be meeting needs of group members.
4. If the primary purpose of Sunday School is *outreach and missions*, then you will be a team of people on mission with God and your members will be missionaries. You will lead in equipping members to live on a mission field and be engaged in missions and outreach events. The key measure of success will be lives being saved, reached, and changed.

A church can do Sunday School for many reasons. Decide to refocus on the primary purpose of Sunday School: life change. Teaching the Bible, building relationships, and caring for people are not the primary goal of Sunday School—these are done to bring people into a personal encounter with Jesus. He is the one who can change their lives here and for eternity and grow them to serve Him in their daily lives and relationships. Measure and reward what our Lord wants your group to accomplish!

## 99. How Can I Encourage Class Member Faithfulness? by Darryl Wilson

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** Dr. Thom Rainer and others have reported that one of the largest influences on the drop in average Sunday School attendance is the irregularity of class members. Absence makes disciple-making efforts more challenging. It impacts children and teens by making them believe that following Jesus and church involvement are optional. It can reduce relational connections and make dropping out more likely.

**WHAT DO I DO?** How can we intentionally encourage member faithfulness? Here are several ideas:

- follow up **every** time persons are absent;
- when they miss, express your genuine **care** and that they were missed;
- ask key members to **invest** in those whose attendance patterns are declining;
- contact, pray together, and remind them of the **next** fellowship/project;

- plan regular class fellowships and ensure absentees get written **and** phone invitations;
- plan outreach and ministry projects where participants can **get to know** one another while meeting needs;
- give every member a class **responsibility**;
- develop prayer **partners** (maybe regular with absentee) who pray together weekly by phone;
- communicate how upcoming **lessons** will help them to live out their Christian lives in the world;
- explain the **benefits** of regular attendance for themselves and their children;
- have an attendance and/or contact **contest** with another class during a quarter;
- use lesson **icebreakers** to help members get to know one another in fresh ways (for affinity discovery); and
- divide the group during the Bible study into **small groups** (3-5 persons) for discussion.

Pray. Care. Contact. Listen. Help. Never give up. Never!

## 100. Scheduling Makes Class Time More Effective by Tim S. Smith

**WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?** I've been accused of calendaring everything, even my own funeral! There is a story but way too long for this article. Even in our Sunday School classes we need to be better organized with the limited time that we have on Sunday mornings. The following is a schedule that I like to use and recommend to other Sunday School teachers and leaders. Please note that this is for an adult class and will not work in a class for preschoolers or elementary age children.

**WHAT DO I DO?** The following schedule assumes an hour. If you have less, adjust times accordingly. Enlist a team to share duties:

### **Fellowshipping Together (5-10 minutes)**

1. The **fellowship leader** will provide light refreshments.
2. The **secretary** will begin the record keeping process.
3. The **administrative leader** will make announcements and serve as the timekeeper.

### **Evangelizing Others (5-10 minutes)**

1. The **greeter** is welcoming everyone and assisting guests to be registered.
2. The **missions leader** will lead the group to be involved in missions.
3. The **outreach/evangelism leader** will lead the group to pray for the lost, be involved in outreach ministry and contact those on the prospect list.

**Loving People (5-10 minutes)**

1. The **care group leaders** will report on prayer needs and ministry opportunities discovered as well as identify those absent and make plans for follow-up.
2. The **prayer leader** will lead the group to pray for specific needs and ask for other prayer needs.

**Investigating God's Word (30-45 minutes)**

1. The **discipleship leader** will remind the group of the importance of a personal worship time and distribute devotional guides.

The **teacher** or the **apprentice** will lead the will lead the Bible study. Bible study should have at least 30 minutes.

## AFTERWORD

### **100 Small Changes Later**, by Jason McNair

In the Foreword, David Francis introduced us to what would be 100 articles to provoke conversations about little things all of us can do to make our groups better. These are not game changers or radical transformations of teaching methods. These are small changes that can lead to course corrections for the direction of your group. Most of them are not new ideas but simply reminders of things that need to be done.

In the Foreword, David Francis said:

***Sunday School is a system.** It's a bunch of things—big and small—that make a Sunday School excellent instead of mediocre. Each relates to another and that to another and so on and so on. So what if every little thing you improved resulted in just one more person coming to Sunday School, coming back to Sunday School, enrolling in Sunday School, attending regularly in Sunday School, serving in Sunday School, and inviting another to Sunday School? Each of the 100 ideas you'll read about in this book may seem inconsequential taken alone. But put 50 or 60 or 70 or 80 into practice and see what happens!*

So, here we are—100 articles later. You now have 100 ideas from which you can lead and draw solutions to little roadblocks you may face while leading your group. Come back to this book often and refer back to these articles when you need ideas and answers.

The contributors of this resource will continue to add posts on the [Sunday School Leader](#) blog site. When a good idea comes to mind, we will share it there with you, the leaders of the movement. Stay connected with us on Twitter and Facebook. Thank you for joining us on this journey of discovery. Keep making #SmallChanges that will grow your groups and help make disciples.

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