

# **GROWTH POINTS**

## **A SUNDAY SCHOOL GROWTH AND EVALUATION TOOL**

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## PREFACE

There are those today who will tell you either by words or action, "Sunday School is dead". Sunday School is not dead. The way your church is doing Sunday School may be dead or causing yours to die but the assimilation process for developing believers and reaching pre-Christians through Bible study is not dead. Churches today are redefining Sunday School. Some are doing a great job and others and just shifting the furniture on the Titanic. There is lots of moving around but we are still sinking. There must be a way to keep people once they have been reached. A Sunday School that is well-organized and building believers who are reaching others is still the best way to grow a church.

Sunday School is being redefined in terminology today. I have heard Sunday School referred to as: Bible study, small groups, life classes, life groups, growth groups, study groups, fellowship groups, ministry groups, Bible groups, Bible cell groups, accountability groups, prayer groups, teaching classes, cell groups, foundation groups, family groups, faith groups and those are just some of the suggestions. Does it really matter what you call it? I am more interested in what it does.

Growing Sunday Schools are being redefined in function. Terminology alone will not change Sunday School. Function redefinition will. We must continually be asking, "Why are we doing this thing called Bible study?" For some the only answer is, "Because we always have done Bible study." Today that is an unacceptable answer. Whatever it takes to build great commission Christians and reach people for Jesus is the reason churches should do Sunday School. That means a new day for most of the Sunday Schools.

In the following pages you will be asked to rethink Sunday School. No more enrollments as we know it. Accountability as we have not ever seen. Teachers who see their role as moving members out instead of building their class (kingdom). These are some ideas you will see. Hopefully you will understand and use some of these ideas.

Sunday School is not dead, just misunderstood.

# INTRODUCTION

I have attempted to take time proven growth principles that will work in any church and explain them in a simple systematic way so that the Sunday School in the church you serve will succeed. A successful Sunday School is one in which people are coming to know Jesus as Savior and believers are being developed into Great Commission Christians. A lot of things must take place for this to happen. Prayer, study, organization and other processes must take place for the Sunday School to be what it is intended and should be. I have found out through the years that it takes three things for a church to grow.

## 1. Inconvenience

The churches that are growing are the churches that have members who know about inconvenience. Change is a way of life. Constant and deliberate change permeates everything the church does. No one is allowed to say or think, "We have always done it like this", because in a growing church there is no room for going back. Someone will have to be inconvenienced if your church is going to grow. It will be you (the church people) or them (the unchurched). We have already tried to inconvenience them and it is not working, maybe we need to be inconvenienced in order to reach them.

## 2. Hard Work

I wish it were easy work. The truth is reaching people for Jesus is hard work. Hard work is translated time. The engaged member is one who is giving time in service.

## 3. Money

For those of you who are in growing churches I really do not have to explain. Quality preschool facilities and equipment are demanded. Children's ministries that excel beyond what some of us ever dreamed are a necessity. Youth and adults are demanding more and more so ministry can be done. It all costs money.

Your first journey in understanding Sunday School growth principles is to know where you are now. This is called evaluation. You will evaluate your entire Sunday School in the following pages. You will come to know your strengths and your weaknesses. Then with some ideas to fix those weaknesses and firm up the strengths you can move to greater days in building that Great Commission Sunday School.

## ENROLLMENT

What is the Current Sunday School Enrollment?

The formula is a “+” or a “-“. A “+” means that your enrollment is greater than it was one year ago. A “-“ means it is less than it was one year ago. Put the appropriate symbol in the space provided. This immediately shows growth or decline.

Sunday School Enrollment as of last Sunday\_\_\_\_\_.

## **ENROLLMENT EVALUATION**\_\_\_\_\_.

Remember, if there is a “-“ symbol in the evaluation space every year, one day this church will not exist.

The Enrollment is the Ministry List

For years we have misunderstood for what the Sunday School Roll was designed. Most churches have the idea that if you get on the Sunday School Roll then you have obligated yourself to the church. We give the new enrollee a lesson book and some envelopes for offering and wish them well. No wonder after three months we can't find these new people. My question is, “whose fault is it they dropped out, theirs or ours?” Mostly “our fault” is the right answer if we truthfully think about it.

Why not change the name of Sunday School Roll to Sunday School Ministry List? In other words, every class would have a Ministry List instead of a Roll. The church would have a Sunday School Ministry List instead of a Sunday School Roll. This better describes what we should be doing.

Therefore, our challenge is to get as many members on the Ministry List as possible. Ministry is the issue, not attendance. However, we know that attendance follows ministry. That is the reason people in our churches drive by other churches to go to the one they attend. Ministry needs being met is why we attend where we do. People will absent themselves when their needs aren't met! Likewise, people return when their needs are met!!

Moreover, there are additional values in being a member besides ministry. Churches should let every member know the value of membership. Here are some values:

Value #1 Life changing Bible Study. Living God's Word is our objective. Every person who attends Bible Study should be challenged to do something with what they learned. It grieves me when I visit a Bible Study

class and the teacher reads a verse and asks everyone their opinion. The teacher should have a word from God, not opinions from the learners. There should be an “ouch” time every week in Bible Study class. That time when the student is convicted and convinced that they must live God’s word even if it means changing their life.

Value #2 Weekly ministry. Someone is in contact every week with every member to inquire about ministry and prayer needs. No one should be left out of the ministry loop. Everyone on the ministry list is needed for prayer support. When there are ministry needs by the members then we have a ministry in place to receive those.

Value #3 The opportunity to use my Spiritual Giftedness. Better teachers encourage and assist members to use their giftedness. The job of an adult teacher to get rid of their members, if God has called them to service elsewhere. A missionary member board, listing all sent out members, in every adult classroom is a reminder of members sent out to serve.

Value #4 Regular fellowship opportunities with other believers. We gain strength and encouragement from other believers. Other believers give us strength to share our faith with non-believers.

The above lists some of the benefits of membership. We need to do a better job in helping the members and prospective members understand these values.

Building a ministry list has distinctive benefits. The more people we get on the ministry list the more people we can care for and assist in their spiritual development.

Put people on your ministry list in as many ways as you can as long as they agree to be on your list. Any type of outreach ministry by the church connects all to the Sunday School. After all, we organize and design Bible Study groups to reach certain groups. In other words, the class of 18-29 year olds is responsible for reaching all 18-29 year olds in the church field. If any 18-29 year olds go unreached it is that class’s failure. Many churches operate on this principle, “Preacher, you reach ‘em and we’ll teach ‘em.” So, if the church is not growing we blame the preacher. Truth is, Matthew 28:18-20 is for all believers. Classes are designed to reach. That is our primary reason for age grading. Make sure your outreach is attached to your Sunday school. Ask people anywhere anytime if you can put them on a ministry list. Then explain the benefits. Remember, we obligate ourselves to them not them to us.



**VERY IMPORTANT!!**

Put your enrollment goal for one year from now in the blank

below. Next, in four progressive steps go from where you are now to where you want to be one year from now, filling in the enrollment goal for each quarter. For example, the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter blank shows the projected enrollment at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter. The space besides allows you to put your enrollment goal in place and place what the quarterly goals will be:

Sunday School Enrollment goal one year from now \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday School Enrollment goal end of quarter one \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday School Enrollment goal end of quarter two \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday School Enrollment goal end of quarter three \_\_\_\_\_

### **How to Enroll People in Bible Study:**

1. Practice open enrollment and encourage members to carry enrollment cards. For example, ask persons to enroll the first time they attend. Inform every Bible Study group how to enroll persons in Bible Study using the open enrollment concept. Provide testimonies in Worship services and sermons, highlighting the successes of open enrollment. Testimonies are great educational and motivational tools as to how this works.
2. Do not emphasize percentages
3. Celebrate new enrollees
4. Control the drop process
5. Report on enrollment progress during worship services
6. Prepare a special Sunday School lesson on "Hospitality" using Acts 11: 19-26. When Barnabas went to Antioch he saw, "Evidence of God's grace." Open arms, a warm welcome, we want you to become one of us, we receive you without reservation," are some of the ideas you can use to convey Barnabas' reception. In this lesson, teaching open enrollment shows we want to include others in our ministry with no reservation on our part.
7. Outreach teams need to use the open enrollment concept. As visitation takes place always have enrollment cards and use them.
8. Invite those enrolled in VBS, mother's day out and other ministries to enroll in Bible Study. The sooner after VBS the better. With two weeks get to every prospect discovered.
9. Provide a place on Guest registration cards for persons to enroll in Sunday School. In fact I have recommended not using guest or visitors cards. Just use enrollment cards to register guests; if the person is a guest then write "guest" across the top of the card. If they are visiting then we want them to see we really want them to become a member.

10. Enroll at special events. Children's activities, youth events, Sr. adult outings, etc.
11. Review the current Church membership to identify those not enrolled in Sunday School. Contact those persons to enroll them in Bible Study. Remember, we are putting them on a ministry list not an enrollment you should attend list. They need to know the benefits of membership.
12. Enroll through special interest groups. If your church hosts support groups or other club type groups it is certainly within your ministry purpose to reach them. Open enrollment and the benefits of membership could reach some.

Thus, the teachers and leaders of the classes must be the persons who make growth/enrollment happen.

## UNITS

The formula in evaluating units is one unit for every 12-18 persons on the ministry list in Bible Study or Sunday School (1:12-18). A unit is a small group or a class. In preschool and children's ministry it is called a department. Whether it is called small groups, Sunday School classes, departments or any other term is not the important thing here. Unit describes a small group of people who are gathered together for Bible study. To determine your ratio, divide the number of units you have into the Sunday School ministry list. Write the number of units and the units ratio in the space provided. If your ratio is between 1:12 and 1:18 then you place a + in the evaluation blank. If not, then place a – in the blank.

Number of Bible Teaching Units or Classes \_\_\_\_\_

Ratio of Units to the Sunday School Ministry List \_\_\_\_\_

## ***UNITS EVALUATION*** \_\_\_\_\_

Units needed at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Units needed at the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Units needed at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Units needed at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

### Organizing the Infrastructure: The Case for Organization

Building the infrastructure for growth depends on the creation and management of small Bible Study classes. Some churches are not growing simply because they are not ready to grow. The infrastructure is not ready to handle more people.

Why do we need to have all of these classes? Why not have one large Bible Study class for our adults and get the best teacher we can find? The reality should be that we organize to reach, minister, fellowship, and teach.

For a number of reasons, Bible Study for many believers is a knowledge-based event; therefore we do not see the need for any other activity to take place. Let's just study the Bible, seems to be the motto of many leaders. Is there really more to it than just Bible Study? Let's just study the Bible has perpetuated the movement for more knowledge. Is more knowledge really our goal?

I agree with scripture that knowledge without action is invalid. Living God's Word should be the underlying theme in every Bible Study group. We must know it but we must live it as well. Many leaders are urging "Deeper Bible Study" when the truth is that we already know enough to turn the world upside down.

Why do some Sunday School classes fail? One, new classes fail when we turn inward and begin to function for our own welfare. Two, unprepared teachers and members who talk about "my class, my room, my teacher, my friends, my, my, my" create a closed group. Third, ineffective organization keeps churches from reaching the "fields that are white unto harvest." Harry Piland said it so well, "The Sunday School is the only organization that exists for those who do not belong."

Sad but true is the case of a Sunday School class that does not grow. Again, from the lips of Harry Piland, "Has a Sunday School class that did not grow last year lost the right to be called a Sunday School class?" One minister recently told me, "We cannot get new believers and members plugged into existing classes, so we are putting new believers and members into classes that are less than one year old, and it is working for us."

I have observed Bible Study classes that are 12-18 months old are many times already in a comfortable, satisfied, turned inward posture. No growth will occur in this posture.

So, where do we begin with new classes or units?

Begin with proper organization. Organize to reach is priority one! Grading for the purpose of reaching is an excellent strategy. In other words, the class of young married ages 18-34 is responsible for reaching all the other young married ages 18-34 in the church's field of ministry. Thus, the co-ed class of adults, ages 49-58, is responsible for reaching all the 49-58 year olds in the church region. Every class should have the motto, "This is our age group, let's go get them."

Also, investigate other ways of organization. I have often thought of "weight grading". In this process we could put scales at the doors and weigh people as they enter, and then send them to the appropriate weighted class. (Nobody is with me on this.) Seriously, lifestyle grading is a great option for organization as well as needs based grading.

Every adult class needs to begin praying about starting a new class from itself. One criterion to think about when considering a new class is chairs. Does our existing class have an enrollment equal to, less than, or greater

than the number of chairs in the room? In other words the number of chairs determines enrollment or the number of people on the ministry list. If there are 20 chairs available then when ministry list reaches 20 we must be ready to start a new class. The goal is not to fill up the room but to have new people in old chairs for growth.

Teachers can begin to mentor someone in the class, preparing them for a new unit. Consider new members and chronic absentees for the new class. Sometimes chronic absentees will come back when we start a new class. Think of lifestyle groups that you could reach young adults without children, empty nest adults, young singles, median singles, single again moms, parents of preschoolers, parents of children, and parents of teen's classes all are working in some churches. Your church might benefit from giving this a try. New classes are the key to growth. Start today thinking when your class can birth a new class. Maybe this is the year!



**VERY IMPORTANT!**

Using the Sunday School Growth and Evaluation Plan Sheet determine how many units you will need at the end of each quarter and write that number below the quarter designations:

- Number of Units (classes) now \_\_\_
- Total units needed end of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter \_\_\_
- Total units needed end of 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter \_\_\_
- Total units needed end of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter \_\_\_
- Total units needed one year from now \_\_\_

**VITAL INFORMATION:** Keep your ratio of Preschool Departments and Children Departments at the following:

**EVERY CLASS MUST HAVE TWO ADULTS NO MATTER HOW MANY PRESCHOOLERS**

<u>Ratio of Children to Teachers</u>	<u>Maximum Enrollment</u>
Birth-Kindergarten 3:1	12
Birth-2 3:1	12
3-Kindergarten 4:1	15
Babies 2:1	12
1-2's 3:1	12
3-Pre-Kindergarten 4:1	20
Kindergarten 5:1	24

## **EVERY CLASS MUST HAVE TWO ADULTS NO MATTER HOW MANY CHILDREN**

Children grades 1-6

One teacher for every 6 children enrolled.

Maximum enrollment is 30 in a children's department.

### **How to do this:**

1. New units can be started on other days of the week beside Sunday. Remember those who cannot attend on Sunday. In almost every community there are people who must work on Sunday and might be reached for Bible Study if another time were offered. Most communities average between 25% and 45% of the people unable to attend on Sunday because of work. It affects the entire family if one person is at work on Sunday.

Think of new classes for the following groups:

- Men
  - Women
  - Co-ed decades (20 something, 30 something, 40 something, etc)
  - Co-ed
  - Singles
  - New Beginnings coed (Divorced)
  - Single again Moms
  - Single again Dads
  - By profession
  - By neighborhood
  - By zip code
  - By age of children
  - Pastor's class
  - Special needs: Mentally Retarded, Deaf, Blind, etc.
  - By lifestyle: Parents without children, Empty nest adults, Parents of teenagers, etc.
2. Knowing how to start a new class is very important. You must provide the infrastructure. Leaders (three are necessary: teacher, coordinator, outreach leader), prospects, space, curriculum, and training. These are necessary before beginning the new class.
  3. Determine who is responsible for leading the Church to start new classes. Is it the Sunday School Director, the pastor, the minister of Education, the Sunday School council, or some other leadership group?
  4. Examine enrollment ceilings as a guide for beginning new classes.

5. Look at class attendance stagnation as a guide for beginning new classes.
6. Study ministry needs as a guide for beginning new classes.
7. Inspect prospect availability as a guide for beginning new classes.

## MINISTRY TOUCHES

The formula for evaluating ministry through the Sunday School is a ratio of one to one (1:1). In other words, everyone on the ministry list (roll) is contacted every week for ministry. Record the number of persons receiving ministry touches every week. If this number is less than your enrollment, place a “-“ in the evaluation blank and if it equals the enrollment place an “+” in the evaluation blank.

Numbers of persons receiving a ministry touch every week: \_\_\_\_\_

### **MINISTRY TOUCHES EVALUATION** \_\_\_\_\_

Ministry Touches needed at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Ministry Touches needed at the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Ministry Touches needed at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Ministry Touches needed at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

#### Proactive Ministry

Churches are very efficient in reactive ministry. In other words, when someone needs ministry and we know about it we respond immediately and usually in a way that shows our concern and Christ’s love. We react to the ministry need and situation as it occurs. Could there be a better way of knowing and keeping up with ministry needs and concerns? After all, what if we are uninformed? What if someone needs a ministry touch and we didn’t know it? Ever have anyone “fall through the cracks?” It is sad and discouraging to find out too late of a ministry need. What could we have done if we had known?

We are all to be ministers (Mark 10:43-45). James and John were really struggling with this matter of greatness in the Kingdom of God. Surprisingly, Jesus did not discourage their quest for greatness; in fact he encouraged it. What they did not understand was that greatness in the Kingdom of God involves ministry. All Christians are servants and ministers. So, with that settled we can move on to how we can be what God intends for us.

Let’s begin with organization. The best organization for ministry is the Sunday School. When we begin to see chronic absentees, (those persons on our ministry list (roll) who have not been in attendance in at least 6 months) we can rest assured they have not been ministered to. I have personally talked with churches that shared with me of their guilt in

this area. One church did a series of reclamation visits with FAITH teams. One visit to a chronic absentee (this person had not attended in 11 years) resulted in a great ministry visit. The absentee needed prayer and someone to show they cared. The next Sunday they were in Sunday School.

Attendance follows ministry. Have you ever wondered why people will drive past one church to attend another? Attendance is based on this simple fact, "My needs are met here." When people aren't receiving ministry touches they drop out. In fact, as I do consultations in Churches, a red flag goes up when I see a Sunday School with less than 40% of its ministry list (roll) in attendance. Ministry is weak.

How do we do proactive ministry? Remember this, everyone, every week, receives a contact for ministry. Never, never ask questions like, "where have you been", or "we have been missing you." All this does is put people on the defensive. They feel the need to come up with an excuse as to where they have been. It really isn't important as to where they have been, and it is really none of your business. Ministry is what believers are about.

A caring class has a Class Ministry Leader. This person organizes the class for ministry. Too often this responsibility has been given to the class outreach leader. This is not outreach; it is inreach. So, the class ministry leader is someone other than the class outreach leader. Group the class ministry list (roll) into small groups of 4-8 persons. One person in each group is asked to be the ministry leader of their group.

The job of the ministry leader is to contact their ministry group every week for ministry. One way to do this in a proactive way is to magnify prayer. The ministry touch could go something like this, "Hi my name is, (your name), and I am calling from your Sunday School class. We are in a major prayer emphasis and I would like to ask you to pray for these two requests. (Give the person the two requests.) Now, could I ask you if you have any prayer requests?" This contact is made every week to every person.

In our youth, children and preschool classes and departments, the teachers and other leaders divide the ministry list (roll) among them and call the students or parents, in the case of younger preschoolers. Children and preschoolers need to know that you care and are there for them. Instead of prayer requests, maybe letting them know what is going to take place on Sunday would be a better idea. Then on Sunday, prayer is emphasized and used for the children to see and learn.

Remember, everybody needs God, but not everybody has realized it. Proactive ministry allows us to be there, showing God's love, mercy, concern and care.



**VERY IMPORTANT:**

The Sunday School Growth and Evaluation Plan Sheet gives direction how persons are touched weekly for ministry.

Ministry touches need to always equal the enrollment. Place the appropriate numbers below the quarterly blocks to the right of Ministry Touches.

**How to do Proactive Ministry:**

1. Weekly touches by every Sunday School class to its members. This is done by phone through class ministry group leaders and preschool and children's class teachers. Be sure the phone contact is for ministry, not for attendance.
2. Ministry visits by Sunday School class members to those who need special touches.
3. E-Mail communication of care and concern.
4. "One List" - A list of prayer needs, ministry news, announcements, etc. sent from the church office periodically. This could be done by email or hard copy.
5. Phone calls expressing concern and prayer.
6. Letters and Cards - especially on birthdays, anniversaries, etc.
7. Meals to those who need some care and concern.

## **SUNDAY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

The formula goal for Sunday School attendance is between 40% and 60% of the enrollment. An evaluation of “+” means the attendance is between 40% and 60% and a “-“ means it is below or above the formula.

Sunday School average attendance in the last six weeks\_\_\_\_\_.

### ***SUNDAY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE EVALUATION***\_\_\_\_\_

Attendance at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance at the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Attendance at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

#### **We Enrolled Them, But They Won't Attend**

I will begin by not apologizing for numbers. Numbers are good when they represent people; numbers are not good when they do not represent people. God gave us numbers to keep up with people and things. A good sign of church health is when the Sunday School attendance is between 40 and 60 percent of the ministry list. Less than 40 percent is an indication of lack of proactive ministry. Over 60 percent attendance is an indication of roll cleaning. Exceptions exist, but they are rare.

Many church leaders have equated faithfulness to God with church attendance. Is this correct use of the ministry list? Our responsibility is not to make sure those on the ministry list are committed to attendance. Recently I heard of a Sunday School that had more in attendance than enrolled. Further investigation indicated weekly purging of the roll had occurred! The practice of dropping people from the roll if they missed three Sundays in a row was being practiced. How sad it is when we take on the responsibility of being the spiritual conscience for others. I have already identified the roll as the ministry list. It is not our responsibility to get people to attend church. It is our responsibility to minister to everyone on the roll (ministry list) every week.

So, what do we do when people stop attending? The current strategy for some churches is to talk about the absentees. I have heard things like: “They know where we are, if they wanted to attend they would.” “They are the ones that moved, we are still here.” “They left us, we did not leave

them.” “They ought to know better.” By the way none of those statements are Biblical.

After we talk about them, the next step seems to be, drop them from the Sunday School roll. Then, mistakenly and selfishly, we devise a strategy to do that.

So, when should we drop someone from the Sunday School roll? Consider the following ideas.

1. When they move away and are gone for six months. Mary moved away and has been gone for at least six months. During the first six months since Mary moved, she needs your prayer and support and besides what if she decides to move back? It would be great to still have Mary on your roll.
2. When they join another church. Wait until John been gone for six months. He needs your prayers and besides what if he does not like this other church? Wouldn't be great to show John that you still are caring and praying for him?
3. Brent died and someone saw him at the funeral. Several years ago I was working with a church on a consultation basis and we were validating the roll. We came across a name no one could positively identify and someone said, “He died several years ago.” So we took his name off the roll only to realize the next day that this person was still alive and in a nursing home; he needed the ministry of the church.
4. When they ask not to be on the Sunday School roll. If someone asks not to be on the roll any longer take a moment to explain that the roll is the ministry list and all we want to do is ask them to pray for us and we will be glad to pray for them. The roll is our way of keeping up with ministry needs. Once someone understands why we have a roll many times they do not object to their name being on the roll.

Remember this, when people are dropped from the ministry list (roll) ministry to them stops. So, be careful and reasonable when taking people off the ministry list (roll).

The major reason for low attendance is lack of care. Everyone needs God, however not everyone has come to that conclusion. When a person comes to the realization that they need God wouldn't it be great if you were the person they turned to for help in finding God? If you have a communication relationship with that person then you can be the person they call on.

Yogi Berra, now retired, is an all time great baseball player. He became the manager of the New York Mets team. They were loosing terribly. After a long, long string of defeats he was asked what he could do to get people to attend the games. Attendance was way down, money was being lost by the Mets organization, and the press wanted to corner Yogi into some kind of meaningless answer. Yogi Berra replied to the press when questioned about the poor attendance at Mets stadium in this way, "You know if people don't want to attend these games, then you can't hardly keep them from it."

The same is true about Sunday School. If they don't want to attend, you can hardly keep them from it. What we can do is show love, concern, patience, kindness, gentleness and mercy through our ministry. The ministry we know as Sunday School.



**VERY IMPORTANT:**

You can actually project future attendance based on the enrollment goals you have set. Always try to project 50%. Fast growing churches find this hard to do because of the time it takes to assimilate a large number of people.

Project your future attendance on the Sunday School Growth and Evaluation Plan Sheet

**How to Promote Attendance:**

**Note:** Attendance is cause and effect, and, therefore is closely related to enrollment, ministry touches, outreach, etc.

1. High attendance days.
2. Soul-Winning emphasis day. Provide evangelistic training. Include evangelistic services to encourage members to bring friends on this Soul Winning emphasis day.
3. Friend Day. This emphasis is centered on bringing friends to Bible Study. Everyone is encouraged through sign up support, commitment cards, prayer walks, for example, to bring a friend or friends to Sunday School.
4. Seasonal emphasis such as sports, fishing, hunting. This emphasis focuses on a theme to encourage people to participate. A guest speaker famous or influential in the subject of the theme is a good motivator.
5. Picture Day. On Picture Day, every class has a picture made then a group picture of the entire Sunday School or church is made.
6. Competition and challenges. (The class in every age group with the most contacts, new members.)

7. Five Fabulous Sundays. These Sundays center on a month with five (5) Sundays. A good time to do this is in the spring or fall. Every Sunday can be a different emphasis. For example, preschool day, children day, youth day.
8. Sensational Summer Sundays. Picnics, parties, fellowships, a cake bake by the men, ice cream suppers, watermelon fellowships, etc.
9. No Excuse Sunday. Usually a pre sign up commitment is made to be in attendance for this one special day. No excuses.

All of these days can be added to with special promotional elements. Design a strategy for planning, promoting and implementing.

## SPACE

The formula goal for space is: One place for every class or unit to meet in. To properly evaluate your space capabilities write down the number of spaces being used and those that are empty. Add the two together and put that number in the blank. Put a “+” or a “-“ in the evaluation blank. A “+” if you have enough space and a “-“ if you do not.

Spaces being used now \_\_\_\_\_

Empty spaces \_\_\_\_\_

Total possibilities of places to put Bible Study classes \_\_\_\_\_

## ***SPACE EVALUATION***\_\_\_\_\_

Space To Grow: Where Does It Come From?

Our fifth area of evaluation concerning Sunday School growth is in the area of space. Lack of useable space causes frustration and confusion. For example, people being put on the ministry list is up, ministry is taking place, worship is exciting, but Sunday School attendance is flat lined. What happened? The first things to look for are space allocation, and space availability. It really is true, you cannot put but one gallon of water in a gallon bucket. We focus on the space issues last instead of first.

I am not a farmer, never have been, but let’s look at a farming example. Suppose a farmer had one hundred cows located on one hundred acres. Those one hundred acres could support one hundred cows, but no more. So, on the one hundred acres with one hundred cows, the farmer has a great infrastructure in place consisting of fences, water, feed, shelter and whatever else he needs for one hundred cows.

One morning the farmer decides that he wants two hundred cows instead of one hundred cows. Does he just go to the cow store and buy an additional one hundred cows? The answer is no. He has one hundred acres that will not support two hundred cows. It will only support one hundred cows.

Before he adds one hundred cows to his herd he must prepare to receive an additional one hundred cows. How does he do this? He must provide the infrastructure. He must buy an additional one hundred acres and on it provide fences, water, feed, shelter and everything else needed for the additional cows. Then he can go and get the additional cows.

Most churches do just the opposite. We have the attitude that we will build and provide when they come. Wrong thinking. We must provide the space and infrastructure then go after the people.

Space must be:

1. Appropriate for the age group using it
2. Attractive. Everybody demands the best today. Put the adults in the worst space and it will be repaired soon. Put Children and Preschoolers in the best space.
3. Adequate. Plan on 35 square feet per preschooler, 20 square feet per child (1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade), 10 square feet per youth (7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade), and 10 square feet per adult.

Think with Me about the Space Infrastructure.

There are four types of spaces in our churches:

1. Worship
2. Education
3. Parking
4. Preschool/Children.

When any of these four spaces is 80% full then growth will stop. Also to be considered is the fact that some space is unusable space.

Preschool (Birth through Kindergarten) must be on ground level. Security for preschoolers and children must be considered as well. The Tennessee Baptist Convention has information concerning safety for preschoolers and children that every church must have. A free copy of this is available by calling the children's Sunday School ministry at (615) 371-7905. Ask for the packet, *Steps to Take to Protect Tennessee's Children*.

Space for youth (grades 7-12) and adults are a little more flexible. Where can you find more space? Let me offer several suggestions.

#### 1. Available Space

Look at space that is being used for storage, and then clean it up and out. Many churches have storage areas that could be used for Bible Study classes. The Worship center or Sanctuary is also good available space. Using the choir loft, balcony, or a section of pews is good use of available space.

#### 2. Adjusted Space

Look at who is using the space available now. Sometimes a preschool room with too little space could use a large adult classroom with few adults. Maybe the two classes could swap space.

### 3. Adjacent Space

Walk outside the front doors of the church and look for space within walking distance. Is there a building or office or room you could rent, borrow or buy for use? Off campus space is good for median adults and young adults with out children. Senior adults, parents of preschoolers and children, youth, children and preschoolers need to stay on campus. Other groups may be able to use space within walking distance. Another adjacent space is homes or rooms within one mile of the church. Again, adults without children are your best prospects for using adjacent space. Commuting more than one mile is not as advantageous.

### 4. Adapted Space

In Connecticut, on a consultation trip, I encountered a church that had eight adult Bible Study classes in the Worship center meeting at the same time without partitions. Every group sat in semicircles with the teacher's back to the center of the room. The teacher sat at a round table and the class participants sat out from the table in the semicircles. All eight classes met without difficulty. It was almost like being in a crowded restaurant. You can see lots of other people but you do not listen to them. Following Bible Study, these groups folded their tables, rearranged the chairs, and the worship service began.

### 5. Multiple use of current space

Go to two or more Sunday Schools and you can increase space usage by 70% or more.

1. Determine the schedule.
2. Determine the organization.
3. Determine the leadership.
4. Poll the membership (only after determining the organization and leadership, otherwise everyone will follow their teacher).
5. Launch the Event.



#### **VERY IMPORTANT:**

Lack of space should never keep a church from growing. The church will never need the space it does not have the vision to provide.

#### **How to do this:**

1. Look closely at what you have. Space walk with a Sunday School consultant.
2. Reconfigure space with an architect or builder.

3. Partition large rooms (fellowship hall, Christian life center, department).
4. Convert rooms (kitchen, offices, stage).
5. Add another Sunday School at another day or hour.
6. Adjacent properties (homes, businesses, schools, within one mile of the church is best).
7. Modular units (Check with local codes before doing this)
8. Build.

## LEADERS

The formula goal is one worker for every five persons on the Bible Study ministry list(1:5). Determine the number of workers you have and divide into the ministry list (roll). Put this number in the blank. Then evaluate with a “+” or a ”-“. If you have a ratio of worker of 1:5 or less, a “+” goes in the evaluation blank. A “-“ goes in the evaluation blank if the ratio is 1:6 or greater.

Leaders are pastors, staff members, Sunday School director, outreach directors, outreach leaders, department directors, division directors, teachers, class team members, ministry leaders; those who work with people in the Bible Study ministry are leaders.

Number of Leaders currently involved in Bible Study ministry\_\_\_\_\_.

Ratio\_\_\_\_\_ (divide number of leaders into the enrollment).

## **LEADERS EVALUATION**\_\_\_\_\_

Number of leaders needed at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Number of leaders needed at the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Number of leaders needed at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Number of leaders needed at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Wanted: More Sunday School Workers

Most churches think they need more Sunday School workers. Truth is, your church has plenty of workers, and the problem is they aren't working in Sunday School. Guess where they are? They are right under your nose, sitting in Adult Sunday School classes.

Paul was asked about the church and how it is to function (1 Corinthians 12). He responded that the church is like a body. Every member of the body is important. Every member of the body has a specific function. When the body part does not function properly, then that part is crippling the entire body. So it is in the church. All members have a function. When we do not carry out our function then the entire body suffers. It is crippled. That is why it is perplexing to see church leaders begging for teachers and other leaders. The teachers and leaders are there, but are not responding to God's call to service.

In evaluating the number of workers you need, the Sunday School Growth and Evaluation Plan shows that one worker for every five persons enrolled is needed in Bible Study. These workers are everyone who works with people in teaching, reaching and ministering. Count them and see what your ratio is. If it is one worker for every five enrolled, then your church is in a healthy posture.

So, if we are short on workers and they are in the church, how do we find and motivate them to respond to God's call?

First, be sure of God's call. The worst thing that could happen is for someone to serve who is not called of God to serve. Prayer, Bible Study, personality, attitude, and passion are some of the things God uses to call us to service. Your passion is reflective of that talent or spiritual gift God has for you to use. Remember "... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you", (Acts 1:8, NIV). When you received the power, you received the talent and passion for service. In his book, "*First, Break all the Rules*", Curt Coffman defines talent as "a recurring pattern of thought, feeling or behavior that can be productively applied." He went on to say, "you cannot teach talent." What we can teach are skills to go make our talent productive. Talent is that giftedness from God that allows you to serve him in your church.

Secondly, mentoring is a very important role of every leader. Healthy churches provide avenues for allowing God to work in unexplainable ways. To have the opportunity to serve God in and through his church is an honor and an awesome responsibility. If you are already serving as a teacher, outreach leader, ministry leader, fellowship leader, usher, choir member, secretary, or one of the other countless leaders then you have the responsibility to help others serve as well. It is sad when one person tries to do it all.

Adult Bible Study leaders should push their members to service. They should have the opportunity, without guilt, to leave their class if God has called them to serve elsewhere in his church. As a pastor I actually had an adult class teacher tell me on more than one occasion, "Now preacher, I know you all will be looking for new teachers for the new church year, but don't you bother my class. You took two from us last year. Just go somewhere else this year to get those new teachers." In other words the class motto this year will be, "Let's keep people from serving God." The potential leaders are there, we need to give them the opportunity to serve by letting them serve. When they are ready to serve then we must provide training. I will discuss training in my next growth point.



**VERY IMPORTANT:**

Allow the Holy Spirit to work in and through the members. No

coercion (come on you can and should do it, please, please, please), no guilt trips (no one else will, just fill in until we get someone else, if you won't do it no one will). Let everyone know of the need, then Pray, Pray, Pray for the people as the Holy Spirit works.

Using the Sunday School Growth and Evaluation Plan you can see how many workers are needed to be in a healthy growth posture.

### **How to have all the workers you need:**

1. Poll adult teachers. They are the best source of potential leaders because they observe their members weekly.
2. Missionary members are lifted up in every adult class.
3. Emphasize "Leader Multiplication" - mentoring to develop future teachers. Remember, every teacher should be mentoring someone.
4. Interest survey. This is excellent to do church wide and not just new members.
5. Contact leaders of short-term classes/study groups.
6. Potential leaders class.
7. Gifts inventory (Jesus on Leadership).
8. Personal contacts of Pastor and Staff.
9. Canvass new members about previous service.
10. Enlist leaders properly; establish responsibility and accountability on the front end of enlistment.

## LEADERS IN TRAINING

The training formula goal is a ratio of one to one (1:1). Every leader does some type of training every year. In the blank beside Leaders in Training in the last 12 months write in the number of leaders who participated in some type of training last year.

Place a “+” in the evaluation blank if every leader has had at least some training in the last 12 months. Place a “-“ in the blank if less than every leader has participated in some type of training last year.

Leaders in training in the last 12 months \_\_\_\_\_

## ***LEADERS IN TRAINING EVALUATION***\_\_\_\_\_

### Train Before You Execute

The scenario goes like this: Emily comes home from her first day of ninth grade. She is so excited about the ninth grade and how much fun it will be, especially ninth grade English. I am somewhat energized myself and begin to inquire as to why all of a sudden she is so excited about English. “Dad, you won’t believe it. This new English teacher is the best. He has already told us just what we will be doing this year. We are going to have so much fun. We are going on four field trips, we are going to play games everyday, we are going to have snacks and sodas three days a week, we can sit anywhere we want, and we will never have any homework. And guess what Dad, class is supposed to be 9:00 A.M.-10:00 A.M. but he says we can be late, so we won’t begin until 9:20 A.M. Also, and here is the best, we can just leave our English book at school and he will keep them on a shelf for us. Hey says it is too hard to get up and get dressed every morning and have to remember to bring books. I am telling you Dad, this is great, and we are going to have a blast. By the way Dad, our new English teacher never finished high school, and he certainly didn’t go to college. It is going to be so much fun.”

Now, if this scenario did happen to me, what would my response have been? I would have been in the principal’s office the very next day asking questions. I am sure that would have been your response as well. Guess what? We do that very thing in enlisting teachers for Bible Study. “You can handle them,” seems to be the most important issue. We ask persons to serve as teachers with no training whatsoever. Sometimes we just hand them a book and say, “You can do it, it’s easy.”

A crisis of training exists in our churches today. Partly, I suspect, because we as Baptists pride ourselves on doing it “Our Way.” We are so independent that we fail to ask for or seek help in knowing exactly how to

teach. We have failed the accountability issue as well. No one is being held accountable to be trained. If we are going to do this ministry called Sunday School, we must do it right to be healthy.

So, Let's Train Leaders!

Every leader in your Sunday School needs some kind of training every year. The leader that says, "I already know that," could be the least effective leader in the Bible Study ministry of the church. All leaders need training, not just teachers. Department directors, division directors, class ministry group leaders, class outreach leaders, department outreach directors, and teachers need training every year.

The Christian Growth Development plan from Lifeway is a strategy that allows trained leaders to earn a leadership diploma. Your church has a Christian Growth Development catalogue with information on earning those leadership diplomas. Develop a plan for every leader to earn their diploma in one year. There are four courses of study needed for the diploma. By offering these studies in your church once a quarter, your leaders have the opportunity to earn their diploma.

The first quarter, offer training during discipleship training. The second quarter, host an associational training event at your church. When you do this, you know more of your leaders will come than if you try to get them to attend training at another church. The third quarter, have a Saturday morning training, a Friday night training, or a Sunday afternoon training by bringing in outside leaders to conduct the training. The fourth quarter, ask the leader to study independently. Give them the leadership-training book and ask them to read it and get diploma credit.

When your leaders earn their diplomas, have a graduation Sunday and present the diplomas to the leaders during the Sunday morning Worship service. The next year there will be a new diploma to earn. See how many your leaders can earn. One diploma earned every year by every leader will definitely change your Sunday School.

I served for several years as a pastor. The year we gave every leader the opportunity to earn their leadership diploma was our best year in Sunday School growth.

Give training the priority it deserves and train, train, train.



## How to Train Leaders for Better Bible Study:

1. Recognition is important. When people complete training they need recognition for their hard work and commitment. Do this in the morning worship service.
2. Offer training events and provide childcare and meals.
3. Offer individual training experiences (let's meet every Friday morning for breakfast until we have completed this training material).
4. Train during Discipleship Training for one semester.
5. Have monthly training events until the material is covered.
6. Network with other churches. Provide training at their site one time and yours another. Use each other's leaders for ideas and mentoring.
7. Invite input in planning and presentation from potential participants.
8. Survey workers to suggest topics and emphasis for training (this is where I need help). Target specific needs
9. Tie training events to family schedules
10. Schedule training across years. Different themes for different years give this a good format.
11. Conduct training at another location
12. Clarify expectations of the front end.
13. Personal invitations to the training event.
14. Handwritten notes of invitation and encouragement.
15. Tie training to the mission/vision.
16. Tie training to FAITH.
17. Conduct training events for other family members.
18. Give every leader a clear job description. Below is a sample job description for an adult class.

## JOB DESCRIPTIONS FOR ADULT CLASS LEADERS

A Sunday School class should be an effective tool in the ministry of the Church. This requires the participation of everyone in the class. Often times, members feel inadequate for a certain position or do not feel a total part of the class. Many reasons cause this to occur.

To build a class into God's class takes the help of every class member. Different talents, abilities and desires are present in every class. Wherever we are in our spiritual walk with God, he can use us in the work of the Sunday School class.

### **Teacher (T)**

This person has the responsibility to lead the class in Bible Study. This Bible study must move members to take seriously the truth of God's word

to the point that it makes a difference in their lives. It must move them to Live God's Word. A variety of teaching methods make Bible study more than just knowledge gathering. Different teaching methods must be used in order for every participant to understand that living God's word is the priority of every believer.

### **Class Coordinator (CC)**

This person works closely with the teacher and helps lead the class leadership team as well as direct class time before teaching. This person gets things moving, makes announcements, introduces guests, etc.

### **Ministry Leader (ML)**

This person would organize the class for proactive ministry. This person's job would be to enlist ministry group leaders and assign them a group of people to minister to every week. This person at the end of every week will contact the ministry group leaders for a report of their ministry contacts. This person would report to the class every week.

### **Ministry Group Leader (MGL)**

This person is to call his or her group every week. This ministry is done by telephone. If a serious need is discovered the ministry leader is contacted and arranges for ministry beyond the class to take place.

### **Outreach-Evangelism Leader (OEL)**

Sunday School is all about reaching people for Christ. This job is to involve the whole class in reaching out. This person would give everyone an opportunity to make contacts. Prospects are given to the OEL for assignment.

### **Class Secretary (CS)**

Good records help classes to evaluate and plan for a better future. This person keeps records for the class and notifies the ML, CC, OEL and teacher of absentees, address changes, etc.

### **Class Treasurer (CT)**

This person maintains control of class funds. This enables class members to give to the class "kitty" as they are able. The "kitty" allows the class to participate in ministry projects throughout the year.

### **Missionary Member Coordinator (MMC)**

This person develops a missionary member board (A poster board with names and pictures of the missionary members on it). This board is displayed on Sunday morning and contact/prayer assignments are made. Missionary members are those members who are teaching in other places while their adult class meets. Everyone who is serving away from their

adult class should be assigned to their adult class as a missionary member.

### **Fellowship Leader (FL)**

This is a key role for the class. The FL will make sure a greeting system is in place on Sunday mornings so that everyone is properly greeted as they arrive to the class, especially the guests. The FL would also plan events for the class as well as Sunday morning fellowship opportunities. The fellowship ideas should always include members, guests and prospects. Getting together in a casual setting, to know each other, to visit is one way to allow everyone to know they have a support system of Christian friends. Missionary members must be included in the non-Sunday morning fellowship events.

### **Prayer Warriors (PW)**

This is perhaps the most vital of all roles. Without prayer and God's leadership, Sunday School is nothing more than a group that meets every week. These warriors are charged with praying for the class leadership, praying for each member individually and praying for other specific needs as they arise.

## **SUNDAY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP MEETINGS**

The Sunday School leadership meeting is evaluated by attendance. This evaluation is based on your last regular leadership meeting, whether it is monthly, quarterly, or weekly. Put the attendance in the blank to the right of attendance.

If you have at least 75% of your leaders at this meeting then you evaluate with a "+" and, if you have less than 75% then you evaluate with a "-". Place the evaluation "=" or "-" in the blank to the right of evaluation.

Sunday School Leadership Meeting

Attendance \_\_\_\_\_

## ***SUNDAY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP MEETINGS EVALUATION*** \_\_\_\_\_

Number of leaders attending leadership meetings at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number of leaders attending leadership meetings at the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number of leaders attending leadership meetings at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number of leaders attending leadership meetings at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> quarter  
\_\_\_\_\_

The Sunday School Leadership Meeting

We all see the need. We need to plan for good Bible Study to take place. We have often heard, "If you aim at nothing you will hit it every time." We know good planning makes our work so much more effective. So, if we know all of this, why do we not make planning a priority?

Successful work demands careful, well-planned outcomes, or we experience inadequate results. Can you imagine how many hours of off-field work it takes for a football team to play one game? How many endless hours of planning, designing, reconfiguring, and strategy sessions does it take to create that one-30 second television commercial? How much time did the team spend on creating that one brochure, sure to catch your eye? If you want the outcome to produce a healthy product, a planning process must be in place.

Therefore, if a Sunday School is successful in reaching people for Christ and in building Great Commission Christians, does it just happen because we all show up? I think not! The purposes of Sunday School will never be

realized until we develop the strategy and design to communicate the purpose. Leadership Planning meetings are just the ticket to having a healthy Sunday School.

The absolutely worst-case scenario for a Sunday School leadership meeting is to overview next Sunday's lesson. I have seen and heard of many, many meetings meet a timely and needed death after several months of trying the Sunday School lesson overview technique. Some of the meeting time needs to focus on Bible Study for next Sunday but not all of it.

Old copies of *The Sunday School Leader* magazine from Lifeway Christian Resources have some good suggestions for this meeting. The March 2003 issue has material devoted to the leadership meeting. The suggestions design the meeting around four focus areas. The [lifeway.com](http://lifeway.com) website has other suggestions for this meeting.

**Focus on Mission.** Communicate the vision, communicate the administration issues, and communicate the church vision and its work. Knowing how to communicate is imperative. The leaders must know how Sunday School classes relate to the overall mission and vision of the church. Remember to keep in front of the Sunday School class at all times the reason we are doing this, to reach people for Christ and to build great commission Christians. Focus on mission will help us turn outward instead of inward.

**Focus on People.** When someone tries and succeeds in joining a Sunday School class and three months later they can't be found, it is indeed tragic. What happened, who failed and what can we do to keep this from happening again? The leadership meeting should focus a large portion of time to people. Member's ministry needs, prospects, prospects ministry needs, fellowship activities, missionary member needs, and evangelism training needs. Is everyone using his or her spiritual gift? How many people have we sent out to teach in other places? (Missionary members) Accountability is a key ingredient here. Are people reading their Bible daily? What are the things we need to do to hold members accountable? What are the benefits of membership and how do we measure those? These are questions that need to be addressed.

**Focus on Bible Study.** Bible Study should lead people to live God's word. How can we make this happen in a better, more effective way? This part of the meeting is a time to evaluate and fine-tune how we communicate God's truths so that people will live God's word. Evaluate last week's session. Was adequate time given to practical application or was the session mostly Bible content? Too often we give all of, or most of our time to content information and tack on at the end some application

material if we get to it at all. Discuss how Bible Study can actually influence how we live this week. Then on Sunday be prepared to challenge the class to live God's word this week.

**After the Meeting.** This part of the meeting takes place after the meeting is over, making final preparations for Sunday. Prayer, further study, and communication with other leaders for follow-up, are all things we need to do before the Bible Study event takes place.



**VERY IMPORTANT:**

By giving priority to this meeting, you will give your Sunday School a great chance at being more than just a place of Biblical information. You can help people actually live God's Word.

**How to do this:**

1. Develop a schedule that works for your people.
2. As you enlist leaders, solicit their participation.
3. Schedule meetings well in advance and set the agenda.
4. Offer real, practical assistance.
5. Provide meaningful testimonies of last Sunday.
6. Focus on "Why" as well as "How."
7. Follow-up on ministry needs.
8. Provide ample resources.
9. Plan for varied types of sessions.
  - a. General meeting (all workers)
  - b. Division meeting (by age group)
  - c. Department meetings
    - i. How often? Monthly as you start, moving to weekly as soon as possible.
10. Set goals for participation.

## PERSONS IN DISCIPLESHIP

The formula to evaluate Discipleship Training is (1:2). Enrollment in Discipleship training needs to be at least one-half of the Sunday School average Attendance. Evaluate with an "+" or a "-."

Discipleship Training Enrollment \_\_\_\_\_

## ***PERSONS IN DISCIPLESHIP EVALUATION***\_\_\_\_\_

Number of persons enrolled in Discipleship training at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Number of leaders enrolled in Discipleship training at the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Number of leaders enrolled in Discipleship training at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Number of leaders enrolled in Discipleship training at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Did You See Jesus in Him?

How much of Church do you need to be a Great Commission Christian? Is one hour of Sunday School enough? Do we need to stay for "Big Church" if we attended Sunday School? (Apparently some think so.) Is attending "Big Church" enough? I mean why do I need to be there all morning? I'm thinking I get all I need in the big Worship event. (Apparently a lot of people think in this way.)

What about those "Super Christians" who come back to church on Sunday evening for more study and more worship? Are these people so deprived spiritually that they need four hours of church on Sunday? And unbelievable as it sounds, Elite Christians come back on Wednesday evening for more! So, by reason of attendance we can say that the best Christians are those who go to church the most. Wrong! The healthy Christians are those who are living God's word in their everyday life.

Sunday School isn't enough. Worship services aren't enough. Intense, in depth, Bible Study events are needed to move believers to the next level. The next level of "what?" you might ask. My contention is that the level of being more like Jesus every day, a life style, causes believers to do two things.

1. To see people like Jesus saw people. Have you considered how Jesus saw people? I am not a farmer; in fact I grew up in town. Having never experienced a working barn it was a real treat (so to speak) when I visited my first working barn. The experience during my first full time pastorate out of seminary.

I made a home visit with a family. After knocking on the front door, the lady of the house instructed me to see her husband, who was in the barn. After tip toeing through the barnyard, (quite a walk in dress shoes and slacks) I entered the barn where my host was admiring his new tractor. I found out he had never had a tractor. This was his first one. I did not consider how he did farming without one. That thought never entered my mind.

Bragging mightily he told me all about this lever and that thingamajig on his tractor. Finally he said, "Now preacher, I just want you to know that the next thing I say to a mule, it will be to his face." I didn't get it. Lots of people I have told this story to tell me they got it right away. No matter how big or sophisticated we get, individuals are important.

Jesus said, "Look to the fields, they are white unto harvest." I may not be a farmer but I do know that if the fields are white unto harvest and we do not harvest them then we lose them. How do you see people? Do you see people as Jesus saw people?

Another example Jesus used was sheep. He saw people as sheep scattered without a shepherd. I know nothing about sheep, however those that do, tell me when they do not have a shepherd they scatter, wander, go their own way, often into danger.

2. Healthy, growing believers treat people as Jesus treated people. Jesus gave the world the right to judge us. "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (Ref HCSB). When we love people we treat them differently than those we do not love. (Are we to not love anyone?) Yet the way some Christians treat other people certainly would give the unchurched a large dose of doubt.

Believers often treat each other with doubts, suspicion, fault finding, and disrespect. In fact I have heard it said, "The way he treats the people who work under him is anything but like the way Jesus would treat people."

Dr. Landrum Leavell preached a sermon I still remember, from my New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary days. He said, "The shabby way we Christians treat others should cause us to fear as to whether we should and will be forgiven by Christ himself." Someone told me, "Well, he should just be glad he has a job." That is not a Christian, redemptive

practice. I wonder, should we take Jesus with us to work, to school, to play? Or, is just to church enough? Talking the Christian life is easy; living the life is another matter.

As my friend Alan Tungett said one day, “When someone leaves your presence they should have experienced a little more of who Jesus is.” The process of building healthy Christians is Discipleship building, or Discipleship training. In fact some churches have tried to come up with catchy names for this Discipleship training to make it sound more important; such as Life School, Life Classes, Christianity 101, 202 for example. Does it really matter what you call it as long as you are leading believers toward seeing others as Jesus saw others and treating others as Jesus saw others?

Evaluate your progress in discipleship. A church should have a number equal to one-half of the Sunday School attendance enrolled in their Discipleship building process. Make sure discipleship classes are building believers. Discipleship is for believers, where Sunday School is for everyone. These classes or events are normally limited in the number of sessions where Sunday School is not. These classes or events once started do not allow you to join once started (we call these closed groups) where Sunday School can be joined at any time (we call these open groups).

Develop a Strategy to Go Beyond Sunday School in Developing Believers.

### **How to do this:**

1. Schedule youth and adult discipleship sessions concurrent with children and preschool programs.
2. Offer a variety of discipleship options.
  - a. Vary the course materials
  - b. Vary the time and schedules
  - c. Vary the locations
3. Promote discipleship studies (not just once) but many, many times.
4. Discipleship fairs. Display materials and offer question and answer opportunities for potential students.
5. Provide a Discipleship Team Leader in each adult class
  - a. This person will champion discipleship training in each class.
  - b. This person recognizes participants in discipleship.
  - c. This person arranges testimonies to encourage discipleship.

## **WORSHIP**

To evaluate worship, the formula is 10%-20%. There should be between 10% and 20% more in Worship than Bible Study average attendance. If your number is greater than that or less than that, then evaluate with a “-“; if it falls between the 10% and 20% then evaluate with a “+.” When counting worship attendance you do count all ministries taking place in the building. Children’s Church, Preschool extended teaching care, etc.

Worship Attendance \_\_\_\_\_

## ***WORSHIP EVALUATION***\_\_\_\_\_

### Sunday School Growth and Worship

Worship attendance has fast become the criteria by which we judge Church growth today.

I disagree. At one time, pastors would be concerned about the number of people in Sunday School. It seems today the important number is Worship attendance. In all reality, it is a great indicator of the number of people who “check us out”. They range from the regular attendees, to those who drop in occasionally, to the actual members. Their intent may vary, but people who just attend worship services are not truly assimilated.

Every church leader is concerned with assimilation and how the members are serving. After all, our greatness in the Kingdom of God depends on service. How are spiritual gifts being used when we just sit and soak? Paul said in I Corinthians that the Church is a body, and for the body to function properly everyone must be in service. I have had persons tell me, “Well, all I can do is just be here. I can just fill this pew.” Nowhere can I find the spiritual gift of “Being Here” or “Pew Filling.”

So, how do we evaluate our Sunday School potential for reaching people based on the Worship service? A good growth principle is 10-20% more in Worship than in Bible Study. If there is more than that, then a red flag of concern should arise. Here is why. There are people in Worship who would attend Bible Study if given the chance to attend something new and different in the Bible Study hour. Guess what? Those people attending Worship and not attending Sunday School do not attend Sunday School for a reason. They do not fit! Wish they did, but they do not. Wish I knew why, but I do not. So rather than worry about whose class they should be in or why they do not attend Bible Study, why not create a new Sunday School class or classes for them? Begging them to fit where they do not does not work. If it did they would already be in Sunday School. This is the difference between “Reaching” and “Keeping” people.

We are doing a great job of reaching people, but a poor job of keeping people. That is why the back door is as wide open or more so than the front door of some churches. Think about all of the people in the last year that attended your church but never joined Bible Study and today cannot be found. Sunday School keeps people; Worship reaches people.

For some reason, we think that Worship as the front door to church growth is a new phenomenon. Not so. In 1960, when I was nine years old, my family decided to move their church membership from the downtown First Baptist Church to a new suburban church. The suburbs were growing extremely fast and so were neighborhood churches, so my parents thought it would be the thing to do to go to church that was closer to where we lived. Guess what event in the life of that church we visited first? The Sunday morning Worship service was our first touch with the church. So, Worship being the front door is nothing new, it was true in 1960.

Lifting up Bible Study in the Worship service on a regular basis is important. Bible Study enrollment cards in the pew racks or worship guides are great ways to encourage enrolling in Bible Study. (Of course, you will want to encourage persons to sign up for the class ministry list, instead of enrolling.) Some churches do this every Sunday, others once a month, some once a quarter. Encourage enrolling in Bible Study while in the Worship service. If you can offer new classes on a regular basis for these people you will find them more accepting of the idea.

The key is follow up. Knowing the value of enrollment and the benefits of Bible Study will make Sunday School even more enticing for those who just attend Worship services.



When persons enroll in Sunday School during the Worship services, make sure they get a ministry touch (contact, visit) follow up before the next Sunday. Then you are on the road to assimilating the new members in Kingdom service.

### **How to do this:**

1. High attendance days that address both Sunday School and Worship service attendance.
2. Present Sunday Morning (or alternative time) as a Total Experience
3. Build continuity between Sunday School and Worship by interrelating themes.
4. Sunday School leaders must attend Worship faithfully.
5. Classes sit together, especially for special events
6. Conduct "All in the Family" emphasis

## OFFERINGS

The evaluation of offerings is very simple. If you can pay your bills, you evaluate with a "+"; if you cannot you evaluate with a "-". Determine your per capita giving by dividing your undesignated weekly average offering by your weekly average Sunday School attendance.

Per Capita Giving \_\_\_\_\_

## OFFERINGS EVALUATION \_\_\_\_\_

More Money? I Don't Think So

Your ministry doesn't need more money; you just need more people. The Sunday School and the offerings is a very debated and sometimes controversial issue today. I see some churches challenging members to give offerings during the Worship service experience. (As if you can't Worship during Sunday School.) Some churches try to urge everyone to give something during the Worship service. "Everyone put some money in your hand and prepare to place it in the offering plate." (There goes the "Cheerful Giver attitude.")

Other churches may even take multiple offerings and when there has been enough received, we can dismiss. Other churches take offerings during Sunday School. So, who is right? When do we give? During Worship services or during Sunday School? And, is it OK to mail the offering in if you miss attending?

Truth is, giving is a local church preference. The leadership of the church will lead everyone to do what he or she deem best. Now, whether the church membership follows or not is another matter.

Bottom line, the people who are connected to the church in small groups and are assimilated into the life of the church are the best givers. Does it matter when these people give, whether it is during Sunday School or Worship services? The reality is that those who are connected members are the most faithful givers. Those who are connected are faithful and loyal to the Church, it's mission and it's ministry. It is where they spend time, resources, and energy.

Every church knowing its per capita giving record is important. In other words, how much money does the average Sunday School attendee represent? Divide your average weekly offering by the average Sunday School attendance and you will have your per capita giving. The beautiful thing about this is that the per capita giving number rarely changes as your church grows. If your per capita giving is \$30 per person and your

attendance increases by 10 people per week then your offerings will increase by \$300 per week. Growing churches will testify to this, even though it is hard to understand.

In 2001 and 2002 the Gallop Corporation did a study of Church members and non-church members and came to some interesting conclusions as to what it takes to be an engaged member of a church. One of the criteria for being a fully engaged member was that of giving actual dollars to the ministry. The Gallop report also stated that the spiritually healthy people are those who are giving actual dollars to the church. It seems that those who do more than just attend are the best financial supporters of the church.

As the Church grows, so grows the budget. In fact, you can develop the budget based on what next year's projected attendance. You can base next year's attendance on the enrollment (ministry list). Budget and attendance is based on your goals and your strategy to meet the goals.

You really do not need more money, you do need more people!

### **How to do this:**

1. Stewardship Education
  - a. Discipleship training
  - b. New Member classes
  - c. Doctrinal studies
2. Stewardship Emphasis
  - a. Sermons
  - b. Special Sunday School lessons
  - c. Stewardship month
  - d. Commitment/Pledge card
3. Stewardship Encouragement
  - a. Use and envelope service
  - b. Mail quarterly contribution statements
  - c. Enclose a letter from the pastor with contribution statements
4. Economic Counseling
  - a. Financial Planning
  - b. Debt Reduction Counseling
  - c. Wills, estates
  - d. New member decision counseling packet

## PROSPECTS! WHERE ARE THEY?

For your church to be in a healthy growth posture you need the number of people in your prospect files to equal the Sunday School enrollment. If a Sunday School class has an enrollment of 20, they will need 20 prospects to grow and create a new ministry list.

Our current Sunday School enrollment \_\_\_\_\_

Our current number of prospects \_\_\_\_\_

## **PROSPECTS EVALUATION** \_\_\_\_\_

Number of prospects needed at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Number of prospects needed at the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Number of prospects needed at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Number of prospects needed at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

## How Do You Measure Up?

At one time every member of the Church was a prospect. Some were prospects longer than others, but every member was a prospect at one time. So, prospecting is very important when we are talking Sunday School growth. Finding prospects and reaching prospects is the hard work of Sunday School growth. To find and reach prospects requires at least six considerations.

1. An attitude and lifestyle that cares deeply for others. How do we see people? Do we ever see someone and wonder if they attend Bible Study or Church? Many of our churches are not even prepared to reach prospects. What would we do if they came should be a very real concern for our church. A Sunday School class without a prospect list is a class that is not thinking of others. It is a class thinking of itself. Do we want the unenrolled to attend your church? Are we prepared for them?

Before you go on an enlargement venture, make sure we are prepared with the proper attitude. What is the best attitude to have? Let's think about adopting the attitude of Jesus. He said, *"I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest," (John 4:35, NIV).* *"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd," (Matthew 9:36, NIV).*

What was the attitude of Jesus? He had compassion and deep concern for everyone including those who had not accepted His love and forgiveness. He told us to see people like He did. They need Him! Those are our prospects and there are many. People's attitude must be, "We are here for them and not just for us."

The Christian lifestyle includes one of looking for people who do not know Jesus as their Savior. Those are the prospects. Too often classes are looking for members from another church to join our church. Your class should be concentrating on those without Christ as the first prospects to reach.

2. Organization that is deliberate. Keeping up with who people are, where they live, when we visited them, and when they visited us last is all very important to the reaching task. Assignments, records, cards and follow up all take time. Touching prospects on a weekly basis keeps the names fresh and current. No prospect should go more than three weeks without a ministry touch.

3. A vision for lost and unchurched people. Could it be that it is time for a vision check up? How do you perceive lost and unchurched people? As a hindrance, a bother, in the way, a threat to my parking space, a threat to my seat, a threat to my pew or a threat to my classroom? Remember Jesus' words about sheep and fields ready for harvest? You have to want them to reach them. If you reach them it will be because of three things: 1) Inconvenience, 2) Hard Work, and 3) Money.

4. Determine the correct strategies for finding prospects. Think! Is what we are doing for them or us? Too often we are so comfortable with who we are and what we are doing that the thought of prospects never is considered. Everything a Sunday School does must be done under the microscope of, "Are we doing this to reach people?"

Several years ago I visited North Phoenix Baptist Church in Phoenix, Arizona. I was visiting with the pastor, Dr. Richard Jackson, now retired, about the facilities and their philosophy of ministry. As we toured the recreation complex, Dr. Jackson made a very profound statement, "We didn't spend millions of dollars building this gym, skating rink, weight room, and other recreation facilities just to have fun. We built this to reach people for Jesus, we are going to have fun while we do it." In other words they didn't build the recreation ministry for their needs, they built it for the prospects. He went on to explain that if a person not enrolled in their Sunday School visits to play ball or skate or use the recreation facility for some other reason that person fills out a registration card before they use the facility and someone from a Sunday School class appropriate for their

age is in contact with them before the next Sunday. They are also asking, "May we enroll you in our Sunday School?"

5. Evaluate every ministry. Is it done to reach others? If not, then why are we doing it? The end result of events and ministries for believers should be to enable the believer to reach others. Ask yourself, "Who are we doing this for?" If it is not to reach others then why do it?

6. Prospects want to know, "What are the benefits?" What are you going to do for me?" You must be able to articulate the benefits of membership to those who are prospects. If people's needs are not met they will absent themselves. What exactly are the benefits? (see "Value of Membership" page 1-2)

### **How To Find Prospects:**

1. Inactive church members. Some members are on the Church roll but not on the Sunday School roll. These members are your first group of prospects to consider. Members are "Hot" prospects because they know where the front door is and what the inside looks like. Assign them a Sunday School class for reaching. Better yet, create a new class of inactive members and get a teacher, secretary, and outreach leader to start the new class.
2. Worship Visitors. Those who attend worship but do not attend Bible Study are another group of "Hot" Prospects. Place Sunday School registration cards in the pew racks and invite those who are not enrolled in Bible Study to enroll. Follow up is the key for this to work. Someone from their new class must make the ministry touch with them that week.
3. Door to Door Surveys. A subdivision blitz on a Saturday morning or Sunday afternoon is a good way to let the community know who you are and what you are doing at your church. When doing the blitz, always take something to leave with the people you visit with. A copy of the Sunday bulletin or a brochure from your church is good. As you encounter these prospects, always let them know you are inviting them to be a part of your Bible study ministry. As God opens doors for you to share your faith you should always be ready to do so.
4. Bible Distribution. Several years ago Bible distribution was a very successful event led by Southern Baptists. We saw that outreach can be done if we have a purpose. Take the Bible to them and invite them to your Bible study. As God opens doors for you to share your faith you should always be ready to do so.
5. Special Events Registration. Every time the church does a special event, enroll people or give opportunity for persons to be placed on the ministry list of Bible Study. For example, special events such

as Vacation Bible School, fall festivals, children events, youth events, concerts, picnics offer the opportunity for people to agree to be placed on the ministry list of the Bible study. The opportunity for prospect to enroll in Bible study (ministry list) should be given.

6. "Who do you know" cards. In Bible study classes give every opportunity for members to let you know of the prospects they know about. Emphasize that everyone sees people every day who do not attend Bible study. They are your prospects.
7. Welcome Wagon. Create a welcome wagon, hospitality ministry in your church. Some communities already have this program. Your church can create a ministry of hospitality to new residences. Make it the responsibility of everyone to watch for new people moving into their neighborhood or area. When they see this, contact the church, and then contact the new neighbors with a basket of gifts from the church. Ask about enrolling the new family in bible study.
8. Web Site. A friendly web site allows for the opportunity to register, ask questions, and to enroll in Bible study. When this happens, be sure to follow up with the contact.
9. Community Benevolence. Ministering through benevolence acts is a great way to engage people in the word of God so they can know God through Jesus Christ. When you do benevolence ministries, keep up with the persons who benefit from the ministry. They are prospects.
10. Crisis Ministry. Some churches are able to refer persons to a professional counselor. When this is done be sure you make that person a prospect for a Bible study class. All churches do crisis ministry almost every day. Follow up with crisis ministries and do your best to enroll these persons in Bible study.
11. Homebound Ministries and Retirement Homes. Many communities have homebound persons who do not have a relationship with God. They cannot come to your church, however we must go to them. They are prospects. Create Bible study opportunities for them where they are.

## OUTREACH

How many classes are participating in outreach each week?

The formula is at least one team of persons from each class doing outreach each week.

To evaluate outreach place a "+" in the evaluation block if every class participates in outreach every week. Place a "-" in the block if less than every class is involved in outreach every week.

Number of classes represented in outreach each week \_\_\_\_\_

## **OUTREACH EVALUATION** \_\_\_\_\_

Number of classes doing weekly outreach at the end of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Number of classes doing weekly outreach at the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Number of classes doing weekly outreach at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Number of prospects needed at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> quarter \_\_\_\_\_

Most churches' outreach really doesn't pan out this way. "Preacher you reach 'em and we'll teach 'em." If the church is not reaching souls then whose fault is it? The preacher's fault, right? I do not think so. The great commission is given to every believer. Each believer has equal responsibility in reaching others. I once had a person tell me, "I don't have that gift of witnessing, but I do other things in the church. I can't do outreach because I just don't have that gift of witness." Wrong answer!! Every Christian is a witness. We really do not have a choice. Well, I guess we do have a choice. We can be poor witnesses or good witnesses. The choice is ours.

Outreach is who we are and what we are as a body of believers. Perhaps I should rephrase that to it should be who we are and what we are about as a body of believers. Too often the church turns inward with more emphasis on "us" than on "them". Even our behavior says "us" rather than "them". In fact, in many churches, the Sunday School is not a ministry at all. It is a program that exists for the comfort and benefit of those who are members. I once had a conferee tell me that his church pruned people. If you missed three Sundays in a row you were removed from the roll. Of course, it took three consecutive Sundays of attendance to get back on the roll. What about that says, outreach? Why is it we want to be the Holy Spirit for everyone else? Why do we think we have to be the spiritual judge of those who do not attend? Bear in mind, our responsibility is

ministering to people not judging them. Outreach is not a program or a night of the week; however, it is a way of life. It is the way we talk, behave, and live. As believers outreach is indeed who we are. Acts 1:6-11 gives clear instruction as to who we are and what we are about. "You will receive power, after the Holy Spirit is come" (Acts 1:6-11 NIV). Those words of reality give a clear picture of where the emphasis should be in the church. So, knowing this, why then aren't we doing a better job of reaching others?

### **My firm conviction is:**

We are not organized to do outreach. We build the organization for us. We create environments of learning so we can "know more" not "do more". Therefore, Sunday School has become a place where we learn, only. It should be a place of learning and doing. Massive amounts of learning do not cause action. For example, just because we know God's will does not mean we will do God's will. Teaching without leading to doing is just head knowledge. So, we build Sunday Schools and it becomes my class, my teacher, my room, my chair, etc. We should be building Sunday Schools with classes who feel responsible to reach as well as grow in Christ. All of the previous articles have been building to the fact that we should exist as a church to reach people for Christ and develop believers.

Many of we believers do not know how to give a verbal witness. However, most know they should. We exit church knowing we should be better witnesses, better at telling others of Christ, better at being a light in the darkness. Most of us do not share Christ with others because we are afraid they will respond to us in a negative way. We are afraid someone will say, "I do not believe in God", or "I do not believe the Bible." If someone responds in this way we would not know what to say.

Outreach is a way of life and we should know how to share Christ with others. FAITH evangelism strategy is a great ministry to teach we believers how to share Christ. Training is not a magical 16 weeks or a magical Monday night or Tuesday night. The wonderful thing about FAITH is the training of believers in knowing how to share their faith. Sharing Christ becomes a way of life when we participate in FAITH. It really does create a "Soul consciousness."

Remember, outreach is a way of life in the New Testament church. If outreach becomes a program in your church it will die a quick death.

### **How to do outreach:**

1. Attend a FAITH clinic. Contact [www.Lifeway.com](http://www.Lifeway.com) for more information.

2. One-on-One enlistment for outreach partners. Then mentor the new outreach partner.
3. Provide materials for parents to use with children. Parenting classes on how to help your children come to know Christ is a must.
4. Have an outreach team from each Sunday School class.
5. Train teachers and members in how to witness. This can be done during an evening worship service, a Sunday School class, a discipleship class or other small group meeting.
6. Present the gospel in Bible Study classes on a regular basis. The teacher would end the class with a brief gospel presentation. It is for the benefit of all. It may help those who do not think they can do this to see it being done.
7. Follow up with those who make decisions for Christ. Often reassure their decision and offer help in the assimilation process.
8. Provide a new members class and a new Christian class.
9. Cultivate unsaved prospects. Invite them to homes, outings, hunting, fishing, golf, ball games, etc. Don't just always hang out with your saved friends.
10. Invite prospects to parties and fellowships.
11. Door to door canvass of subdivisions. Knock on as many doors as possible in a 1-hour time period, giving information about your church. This information must tell three things: 1) Who you are, as a church. 2) What you are doing, as a church. 3) Where you are.
12. Conduct an inquirers class for those who may be interested in knowing more. Advertise and offer this class with no strings attached. Provide a free meal and lots of information about the church and its ministries. Always include the plan of salvation as a part of who you are and what you believe.

