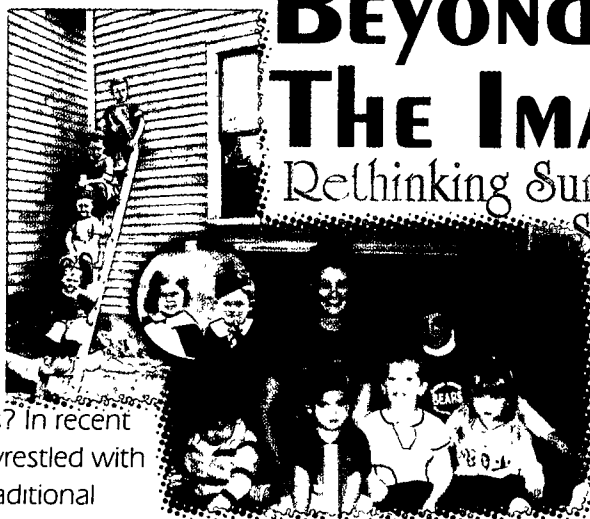


# DIRECTIONS

NEWSLETTER FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

## Beyond The Image Rethinking Sunday School

What comes to mind when you think of Sunday school? A classroom of bored children and adults sitting in chairs and listening to someone lecture from a teacher's book, or do you think of a place where people are excited to learn, have fellowship with others, and become refreshed by God's promises for their lives? In recent years many churches have wrestled with the public perception of a traditional Sunday school.



To combat this idea of ineffective convention, some churches have changed the name of their Sunday school hour, others "scrub" the program altogether, while others switch programs or curricula trying to find a plan that will actually work.

Names and images seem important in this high tech world. However, what is most important is that we hold on to our values—loving teachers and church leaders who are teaching God's Word and producing disciples at every age level. This is what Jesus did and what HE continues to call His church to do. . . make DISCIPLES.

There are many arguments, pro and con, for changing the face of Sunday school. The words "Sunday school" are still recognized as a wonderful tradition with a rich history. Many people still associate Sunday school with a pleasant atmosphere that is familiar and appealing to Christians and non-Christians. Regardless, no matter how people perceive the title, "Sunday school". . . it is what goes on inside the Sunday school that really counts!

Jan Bunner, a children's ministry coordinator in DeRidder, Louisiana, says, "The unchurched know that God can be found at Sunday school and that a teacher there will accept them unconditionally. Churchgoers know that the biblical teaching at Sunday school is the same—always."

Based on interviews conducted with 601 senior pastors of Protestant churches in the United States, 97% of the churches represented have a Sunday school ministry. George Barna's research indicates that by the year of 2002, these Protestant pastors expect the Sunday school to be as important, or even more important, to the ministry of their churches than it is today (Barna Report, 1998).

A few years ago, Chuck Colson, Founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries, was visiting Buckingham Palace for the Templeton Prize ceremonies. He was asked by Prince Phillip, "Mr. Colson, what can we do about crime here in England?" Colson replied, "Send more young British children to Sunday school." The Prince smiled politely

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as though Colson was joking. But Colson pointed out a study by sociologist Christie Davies of the University of Reading which revealed that when Sunday school attendance was highest in England, crime was lowest. Conversely, when Sunday school attendance declined, the crime rate increased. Colson continued, "Send young boys to Sunday school so they can be taught the basics of Christian morality."

This is a real confirmation of **the power of biblical truth and loving people to transform lives and renew society.**

One popular Sunday school class, in the Foursquare movement, is taught by Dr. & Mrs. Howard P. Courtney. This adult class of the Burbank Foursquare Church averages well over fifty people each week.

Is it the name, "Victory Class"? No, it is loving teachers who faithfully live and teach biblical truth. It is their careful planning and prayer for each member of that class. It is the fellowship, love and concern for each other. It is the way they boldly declare the uncompromising truths of the living God. Most important, it is the anointing of the Holy Spirit over the Courtneys. Dr. Courtney believes that the Holy Spirit brings a living and vital blessing on the class.

Be encouraged, Sunday school is alive and well as we move into the year 2000. Now more than ever, we must be serious about teaching God's Word in a systematic yet loving approach to people of every age. Allow the Holy Spirit to move upon you in producing disciples.

Rick Wulfestieg,  
National Minister of Christian Education



Many churches combine age groups because they don't have enough people to staff individual classes. Others combine their groups for special events or activities. Listed below are pros and cons of combining children of various ages into large groups.

**Pros:**

- In small churches, it can be more fun to be part of a larger class rather than being in a class of one or two children for each age level.
- A large group can generate a large level of motivating energy.
- Youth and adults may enjoy a larger variety of people.
- Some older children are capable of helping with younger children. It builds self-esteem in older children and younger children need the attention.
- By mixing children and adults you could create an inter-generational learning approach.

**Cons:**

- While it is practical to combine age groups, learning efficiency drops as group members become spectators instead of active learners.
- Many public schools have mandated class sizes to approximately

25 children. When you consider the different age level characteristics, as well as various learning styles in a large group, the number of children in a Sunday school or children's church group should be even smaller.

- Leaders are unable to interact with individual learners about their understanding and personal application of the lesson being taught.
- Teacher/student relationships can be affected. In a large group of children with few teachers it makes it more difficult for the leaders to know the children they are working with. There is a tendency to focus on the children who are regular attenders or those who are misbehaving rather than those who come occasionally or first time visitors.
- Older children can intimidate younger ages and can be harder for a few leaders to control.

Keep in mind that a learner is better served in a small group than in a group that is too large.

We recommend The 21st Century Sunday School by Wes Haystead, Standard Publishing, as a good resource to help churches determine group size, room size, teacher-student ratio, recruitment, and much more.

# influence of enthusiasm

darrell fraley

One of my favorite times of the day is when I've just arrived home from work. It doesn't matter whether the day has been good or bad; when I throw open the door I'm guaranteed an enthusiastic reception. My two young children scream, "DAAADDDYY," jump on me, and hug my legs until I can put my briefcase down to hold their hands and do the "Daddy's home dance" around the room. I'm excited to see them, they are excited to see me, and I hope it never ends.

It's incredibly reassuring to know that regardless of what kind of day I've had, I always get the same treatment, and I know that someone is excited to see me. That simple ritual with my children has a profound influence on me. It isn't something I had to teach my children to do (for me). It is an act of love that flows out of their excitement and childhood expression. It simply comes naturally to them to express happiness when they are joyful.

I have a four-year-old friend named Andrew. He has flaming red, curly hair and a round face that is always decorated with a pleasant smile. Andrew is the most enthusiastic, excitable kid I think I have

ever met. I love to be around him. His enthusiasm lifts me and encourages me as a children's pastor. . . Andrew doesn't know it, but the single greatest asset to his personality is his enthusiasm. It sets him apart in a crowd, and it wins people's hearts over to him. Something else Andrew doesn't know is that his expression of enthusiasm toward Sunday school and church has done more for me, his pastor, than I believe I can ever do for him. Every time I think of Andrew, I pray that God would preserve the enthusiasm within that little boy so that he may continue to bless others as much as he has blessed me.

The enthusiasm of a child is very precious. And the enthusiasm of an adult, though rare, is just as precious. Inhibitions, the fear of being embarrassed or conspicuous, keep some adults from expressing the joy of the Lord in their lives. To many adults, a public expression of enthusiastic joy is off limits, not allowed, and an inexcusable outburst viewed as a lack of self-control rather than a portrayal of happiness. Enthusiasm is something viewed with suspicion rather than embraced and enjoyed.

You won't find that attitude with children. Children are responsively drawn by enthusiastic leadership. And as the leader expresses excitement and enthusiasm for Christ and His Word, children will follow and imitate.

Excerpts from: Fraley, Darrell. Principles of a Purpose Centered Children's Ministry 1998© Children and Family Ministry.

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## Use God's values to counter secular values.

Be aware of the content (not rumored information) of popular television shows, movies, and music. Rather than criticize children for watching or listening to these programs, bring in a biblical truth that counteracts these beliefs and will help the children make informed decisions as to what they choose to watch or hear.

## Build your church into a support system.

Connect with unchurched families through outreach ministries, plan family activities, and establish parenting support groups.

## Organize a mentoring system for children.

Arrange "adopt-a-kid" family camping, build relationships with children in the community, provide aid to broken families, and inform parents about what is being taught at church.

## Cherish children on all levels of church life.

Train yourself to view children by their potential. Implement annual prayer summits to specifically pray for children. Provide teacher training for special needs children.

## Align the family of God.

Insist on family purity among leaders, avoid over-scheduling of church activities to allow for family time at home, emphasize teen abstinence and offer them alternate activities and provide mandatory and effective premarital counseling.

Adapted from "36 Ways to Improve Our Impact on Children" *Enrichment*, Spring 1999, p 15. Boonville. The General Council of the Assemblies of God.



# Developing New Church Leaders

Today's churches need leaders, and it is the responsibility of church leadership to develop future leaders. A multilevel plan should be created that will include specific training and consistent mentoring. Those already in positions of influence should encourage others to lead. Training should include the important standards of character, vision, and influence.

**Character** - Leadership capabilities should result from the character of the Christian who earnestly seeks God through time spent with Him and reading His Word. This potential leader should desire God's will instead of his own and seek to minister to the needy around him.

**Vision** - people cannot lead unless they know where they are going. They must have objectives and plans and believe in God's desire to use them. Developing leaders

means helping them to find their own ministry vision--for the present and for the future.

**Influence** - Church leaders can be multiplied when there are leaders already in place who can influence others and encourage lay involvement in ministry. This approach will train leaders to empower, mentor, and motivate others.

It is important that they learn how to prioritize, make their own decisions, and manage their time effectively. Leaders must also know themselves and their strengths. Their motives must be pure, and they must use the spiritual gifts, experiences, and personalities God has given them to strengthen their leadership potential.

Excerpted from "Training, Developing Church Leaders" *Current Thoughts and Trends* March 1999. The Navigators.

## The Children's Pastor:

# A VITAL TEAM PLAYER

Dear Senior Pastor:

As your Children's Pastor I have a few things on my heart I would like to share with you. I share these things so you might have a better understanding of my ministry and who I am as a person. I appreciate your leadership and am hopeful that these matters of the heart will draw us closer in our ministry to the people of our church.

1. I desire to be part of the ministry team and have input in the direction of my ministry. Please allow me to contribute to the church's bigger picture; I believe I have a lot to offer. I want to help the church in anyway I can. Please accept my contribution as a concerned member of the ministry team and church.

2. I'm a minister, not a baby-sitter. As a children's pastor, I disciple children as well as the adult teachers and leaders who work in the classrooms. Every child needs a biblical moral compass to guide and protect him or her throughout life. Let's teach people that kids are valuable members of the body of Christ.

3. Please support me from the pulpit so people can recognize the importance of children's ministries. I need visibility to help me recruit volunteers. I don't have to be exalted, but it's tough to find people when they don't know you. Visibility creates vision. Allow me to share my vision and people will know my heart for kids.

4. Please take time to notice, recognize, and appreciate the people who give up their "feeding" time to work with our kids. Just a word or two from you, their shepherd, will make a difference. If volunteers know that what they do (unseen and often unheard) is appreciated, they come back repeatedly with a heart full of service and love. Help them feel their role as a member of the church's ministry team is as vital as any other role.

5. Recognize that teachers need to be trained, not just shoved into a classroom. Part of my job involves discipling them, and without training, they will grow weary. Without training, we won't be

growing disciples in Christ—we'll be scurrying to find replacements. Help me in anyway you can; I value your expertise and knowledge.

6. Understand that children's ministry cannot and likely will not generate income—it requires a substantial budget to be effective. If we are unwilling to put resources into ministries that are not self-sufficient, children's ministries will suffer. Children are dependent on their parents for survival and their church for spiritual survival. When the bottom line is discussed in budget meetings, believe with all your heart that this is one area we can't afford to sacrifice.

7. Let me minister to the kids as my expertise has prepared me. Kids are not little adults; they need ministry on their own level of understanding. Be comfortable that although the tools are different, the message is still the same. Treat me with dignity as an expert in children's ministry, pay me a fair salary, and I will feel appreciated and want to continue my ministry in your church.

8. Don't confine me to only working with children. See me as Paul saw Timothy; I may have other gifts and burdens as well. For example, I would appreciate the opportunity to lead an adult ministry or to preach. Such interaction and opportunities will again strengthen my desire to stay because I will be less likely to feel frustrated and burned out.

Finally, Pastor, I wish to pledge my loyalty and support to you. If I have concerns, I will talk with you—and you alone—about those issues. In return, I ask you to consider me a part of your ministry, a vital team player. Don't look at me as a hireling. Look at me as a pastor to the children of your church. Recognize my gifts in this area, and I will help you to grow the church both numerically and spiritually. My heart is to pastor the children just as you pastor the adults. I want to be your companion in ministry. I love kids, and I love you as my pastor.

For Christ and Kids,  
Your Fellow Servant

**Look at me as a pastor to the children of your church. Recognize my gifts in this area, and I will help you to grow our church both numerically and spiritually.**



As part of my missions orientation, I met with Rick Wulfestieg in the Christian Education Department. His explanation of the department's vision and what was available surprised me as I realized how much time they would save me in developing Christian education resources. All the materials Jannie and I would need in raising up new converts, establishing them in the faith, and theologically training them were already prepared and available. It made me feel somewhat silly for the amount of time many of us put into "re-inventing the wheel."

Before we parted, he left me with a Good News Bears Manual. To insure that children were discipled on the mission field, I knew that I would one day have to train a leader for that area of ministry. I also understood that if I am to train someone to use a program such as Good News Bears, I must be completely familiar with the program and know that it provides sound, systematic, motivating, fun instruction that is relevant to many age groups.

I sat down that evening and opened the manual and read it from beginning to end. By the time I was finished, I was convinced of the anointing of God upon the Good News Bears ministry. After reading it, I saw it as something, distinctly Foursquare, that could excite children and encourage them to become part of this ministry. It is a program that even we could implement with a few volunteers. It provides a balance of fun, fellowship, worship, doctrinal instruction, and practical application for young children through pre-teens. It teaches children to not only believe, but to understand why they believe it, and to act out what they believe in their community.

Most importantly, I realized that with a few minor adaptations, this program would be effective in any nation or culture in the world.

Michael Stubbs served as Director of Midwestern Bible Institute, Victory Fellowship Foursquare Church, Emporia, Kansas. He and his wife, Jannie, currently serve Foursquare Missions as missionaries to Malaysia.



Screening Volunteers  
to Prevent Child  
Sexual Abuse

Your Church

## A Safe Place for Children

Every child is vulnerable to sexual abuse. Parents, teachers and churches must face the possibility that someone may hurt or take advantage of a child.

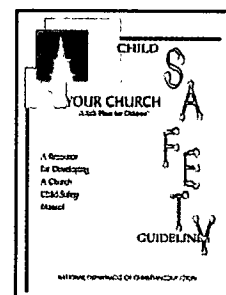
Research indicates that as many as one out of every four children will be the victim of sexual abuse. Almost all of these children will be abused by someone they know and trust: a relative, family friend or caretaker. Out-of-home abuse constitutes 5% of all reported sexual abuse cases.

Your church should have received the manual, **YOUR CHURCH: A SAFE PLACE FOR CHILDREN**. Additional copies may be purchased for \$19.95.

Now is a great time of the year to design an effective plan for recruiting and screening volunteers who work with children and youth.

In general, the greater the opportunity for a volunteer to sexually abuse a child in your church, the more extensively that volunteer needs screening.

If you have questions concerning this process, call the National Department of Christian Education, (888) 635-4234 ext. 4270



### DIRECTIONS

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