

DIRECTIONS

Foursquare National Department of Christian Education

A Newsletter for Christian Educators

Winter 1996 -97

Work Smarter, Not Harder

"Stupid is as stupid does."

This is a well-known line from the movie, Forrest Gump. The character of Forrest Gump invaded the lives of America like no other movie character. He represented a simple, down-to-earth approach to life that many people could not comprehend. This simplicity was sometimes interpreted as stupid. In situations when someone would ask Forrest, "Are you stupid?" Forrest would always respond with, "Stupid is as stupid does." This answer always confounded the interrogator.



As I have thought about training our teaching volunteers, it seems we need to emphasize, "smart is as smart does." Our volunteers face multiple demands from careers and families, therefore, we need to rethink the scheduling, training and affirming of these priceless people.

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Idea Share

Do not get overwhelmed by working harder, rather, try to work smarter. Here are just a few suggestions to help build and encourage your volunteers:

- Try creative scheduling by offering regular teachers at least one month off. Even if you have to combine classes once in a while.
- Incorporate helpers who may not want to teach, but could help prepare snacks or crafts.
- Offer alternative training opportunities: Create a library of teacher training videos and books they could take home and return later.
- Develop a network in which your teachers can share with one another about successful teaching tips or crafts.

This issue of Directions is full of ideas and resource suggestions to make training teachers and recruiting volunteers a joy rather than a challenge.

In Christ,

Rick Wulfestieg

How to Work with Rude, Obnoxious and Apathetic Kids

Oh no! The "D" word!

Many youth workers have misgivings about using *discipline*. But disruptive and apathetic kids can hinder the effectiveness of a ministry to young people.

In truth, the goal of discipline should be to produce young people who are well balanced, secure and mature. Don't let discipline problems drive you out of youth ministry. Instead, take the positive approach and reap the benefits, both for you and the youth.

Accent on the Positive

One of the biographers of Ganchi said about him: "He often changed human beings by regarding them not as what they were but as though they were what they wished to be."

It is unhelpful to ask your people, "What's the matter with you? Why can't you sit still? What has suddenly gotten into you?" These are unanswerable questions. Even if they knew, they could not explain their conflicting emotions, urges and desires.

Positive Feedback

Telling young people what they do right is more important than telling them what they do wrong. Tell a young person how much you see him or her maturing, and you will see a face light up. Reflecting positive qualities to your young people is one of the strongest ways to build positive self-images in them. To affirm their positive character traits, look for the positive things they do as they work along side others in the youth group and let them know what you see.

Positive character traits include the following: cheerfulness, compassion, courageousness, courtesy, creativity, decisiveness, efficiency, honesty, humor, kindness, loyalty, organization, patience and punctuality.

Great Expectations

Some youth workers never expect their young people to obey, and thus they are seldom disappointed. But when you believe in your kids, they'll rise to your expectations. Don't stifle their desire to succeed by telling them they can't. Instead, let your positive attitude rub off on them; it will show in their performance.

It's odd how faultfinding can make a young person deaf. He learns to turn off the negative youth worker because he knows what type of comments he is going to hear. Faultfinding is self-defeating; when you have legitimate criticism, the young person is not likely to heed it. He has heard too many picky statements which he knows were not valid. Faultfinding does not change a person's behavior on a long-term basis. It may sometimes achieve immediate results, but lasting results are rare.

Becoming a Positive Disciplinarian

If being a positive disciplinarian calls for a dramatic change in your style of leadership, try these approaches:

- If you are set in your ways about how things are done in your youth group, then try to become more flexible by providing alternatives that encourage independent thinking and recognize individual learning styles.
- If you are labeling some of your young people as lazy, dumb, stupid, bright, charming, etc., then try to stop and begin to see them as real people with both positive and negative qualities. Help them overcome the negative while building on the positive qualities.
- If you are given to blaming, ridiculing, teasing or sarcasm, then try to stop it. No one likes this kind of behavior. They are put-downs that keep the war going.
- If you overreact to minor infractions of the rules, then try to count to ten before responding to the problem. Admit the problem to your young people. Talk about your feelings. Listen to theirs. Ask for help increasing and enforcing humane rules.
- If you are behaving like a traffic cop, then try to learn what to see and what not to see.
- If you are unwilling or unable to smile, or find humor in the daily turmoil of life with students, then you are in the wrong line of work. Humor and a quick, frequently used smile are the best tools a youth leader has for maintaining peace and sanity in the youth group.

Making the Team a Winner

The importance of teacher training

Why is training important?

Training opportunities demonstrate to the congregation that we all need to improve our serving skills. New teachers know that help is available.

Teacher training helps teachers become more effective communicators of the Bible. The better the teacher communicates God's Word and motivates students, the greater understanding the student will have of God and the Bible.

Teachers who understand how to speak at the students' level, maintain classroom control, and use a variety of methods will usually enjoy teaching. Applying what is learned in training sessions gives encouragement and confidence in one's ability to teach.

Should leaders require regular staff meetings?

Regular staff meetings are essential because they:

- remind teachers that they are not working alone, but are part of a team ministry of discipleship
- provide opportunity for the team to pray together and ask God to use their service to touch the lives of students
- give teachers a set time for planning to assure that each person knows his responsibilities
- offer teachers an opportunity to share problems and joys and receive suggestions from one another

All of our people are very busy. How can I expect them to give time for training?

When we realize that there is no greater task than sharing the eternal Word with people who have eternity at stake, then we must pursue training. However, training opportunities should be balanced. A Sunday school convention or a visiting workshop leader should be planned well in advance. People need several months notice to get these events on their calendars. On-going training can be conducted within regular monthly meetings.

What can teachers do on their own to improve their skills?

READING - Reading articles in Christian education magazines or books on teaching can be helpful.

OBSERVING - Since we learn best through modeling, a teacher can benefit from observing the classroom behavior of a good teacher. The teacher may want to arrange for a substitute for his or her own class, so that he can observe another class in the church (or another church).

SHARING - Discuss with other teachers how they prepare and interact with their students. Occasionally ask the students what they like.

Excerpted from: Making the Team a Winner. Insight. David C. Cook Publishing Fall 1995 Used with permission. Taken from Cionca, John R. The Trouble-Shooting Guide to Christian Education. \$9.99 Available through Foursquare Publications.

How To Develop An Effective TRAINING PROGRAM

A good training program should have four major characteristics:

It is related to the age level taught. While principles of learning are essentially the same for all age groups, teachers need specific applications of these principles for their age division. Divide into groups after a main session.

It is related to curriculum taught. Teachers should be able to see how their teacher's manual can help them continue to implement to a newly learned procedure. For this reason it is ideal for the staff to do some planning by using suggestions from their curriculum materials.

It is experiential. Unless a teacher tries a new skill or method, he/she will probably not feel confident enough to use it in class. Every training session should involve participants in observing and practicing the skills they are being trained to use.

It is regular and systematic. When a person is recruited the church should make clear its plan for equipping that person to succeed. All training efforts should be carefully selected to reinforce that plan in a systematic way.

A good program should include three types of training:

1. SPECIAL TRAINING EVENTS. Every church should participate in at least two special training events each year, four to six months apart. More than one such event is needed because (a) not all teachers will attend any single event, (b) new teachers need significant reinforcement during the first two years of service and (c) new staff added during the year need special help.

2. MONTHLY (OR WEEKLY) PLANNING/TRAINING MEETINGS.

In addition to special events, all workers should meet at least once a month with the other person(s) involved in their area of ministry. Any group endeavor requires communication and correlation among members. In addition, mutual problem-solving and idea-sharing is needed by all teachers and is most effective when provided in relation to upcoming lessons.

3. INDIVIDUAL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT. Observe a Sunday school class in session. Make sure participants understand questions/responses. Are lesson aims being met? Review curriculum with the teacher to evaluate its compatibility with the church's teaching philosophy.

Excerpted from: Brown, Lowell E. Sunday School Standards. Ventura: Gospel Light Publications, 1986.

More Than Surviving Stephanie

by Pamela Honan Peterson

Each new Sunday school year I sighed with relief as Stephanie ran wildly to her new classroom. *Still too young this year*, I'd gloat, throwing a pitying glance at Stephanie's teacher. I felt the way people do when they survive a tornado or when the doctor tells them the tumor isn't malignant.

Then it happened.

Stephanie turned 8. Now I get the sympathetic but relieved looks from fellow teachers. Now I brace myself as Stephanie heads straight for me with her bright pink jacket askew, latest new toy in tow, chattering to everyone and no one.

I've discovered that I don't love every child equally. I'd prefer not to deal with the Stephanies of the world—those kids whose quirks and habits annoy me to distraction. But by the grace of God, I'm learning how to relate to Stephanie in kind, caring ways regardless of feelings. And a miracle of grace is occurring. I'm developing a soft spot for her—something I never expected.

If there's a Stephanie—or a Stephen—in your life (and if there isn't, there will be), perhaps what I've learned can help you more than survive your problem pupil.

1. Admit your negative reactions, then confront them. At first I tried to hide my feelings about Stephanie, even from myself. But pretending didn't help—or fool anyone, especially Stephanie. Once I acknowledged my feelings, I could pray and work to grow beyond them. Admit your feelings. Ask the Lord to help you change, and seek advice from fellow teachers.

2. Get specific. Identify what bothers you about the child rather than reacting with vague feelings of dislike. If you can identify Tommy's silliness, aggressiveness, or even his ingratiating attempts to be teacher's pet as the problem, then you can help him—or help yourself live with the situation.

3. Seek insights from previous teachers and parents. You may gain valuable

perspectives about your problem pupil from former teachers. Ask about their insights and coping strategies.

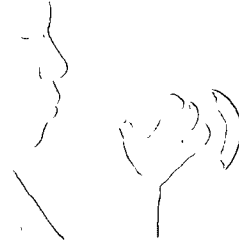
You may also get help from mature, objective parents who are aware of their child's problems and willing to discuss them. Tread carefully. You may want to ask your pastor about approaching parents—even if you know them well.

4. Touch. For several Sundays I struggled to relate to Stephanie in appropriate ways. One morning before class she gave me a quick hug. I was surprised, but didn't have time to think about it. I notice, however, that she seemed less irritating that morning.

I decided to experiment. I gave Stephanie a quick hug each week when I greeted her or as she left class. I began to warm up to her even though her personality did not change. The Lord has created us in such a way that hugs can form bonds of closeness, even with people we might not otherwise like. Try an arm-around-the-shoulders hug or a pat on the arm with your least favorite learner and see what happens.

5. Catch the child doing something good. Because I thought of Stephanie as a problem. I had to make deliberate efforts to notice when she cooperated or resisted the urge to demand all my attention. Although her showing off and incessant chatter may never completely disappear, they are softened and offset by her curiosity, good ideas, and ready smile. Part of my challenge is to remember these characteristics and give her opportunities to shine.

6. Get acquainted one-on-one. Try to spend time—a few minutes before or after class—getting to know your problem pupil. This will help you to see



positive traits and learn about interests, pets, favorite toys, and games—things that make up the complete child.

You may discover serious problems in the home that explain why the child acts in certain ways. Consider sharing this information with your pastor.

7. Ask her to write you a letter. What do you think your Stephanie would say if she wrote you a letter? How would she describe herself? What reasons might she give for the characteristics that drive you crazy? Use this written form of role play to find out.

Furthermore, imagine that you are your difficult student and write a letter to your teacher. Include general information about your self, your likes and dislikes, feelings about people and events in your life. Give reasons for your behavior as you the "child" see them.

I struggled to explain to adults my 8-year-old, only-child-of-older-parents perceptions of my world and myself. I tried to get teachers to see my more likeable self and understand why it was hard to do and be what was expected of me. Writing this letter, trying to get inside Stephanie's skin, helped me understand her at her level. Though she may never be my favorite student, I no longer get headaches thinking about Sunday mornings.

8. There's a child of God in there somewhere. As you experiment with these suggestions, pray for grace to see your problem pupil as a child of God. In time you will begin to look forward to your Sunday morning encounters with more delight than dread. You can do more than simply survive Stephanie.

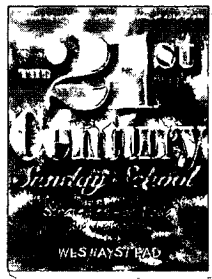
Used with permission. Pamela Honan Peterson is a free-lance writer and Christian educator who lives in South Bend, Indiana

MAKING ETERNAL IMPRESSIONS

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Wes Haystead
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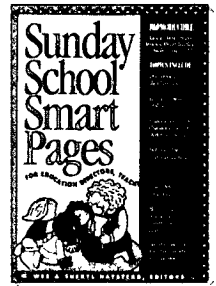


"So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it." Isaiah 55:11

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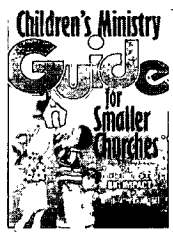
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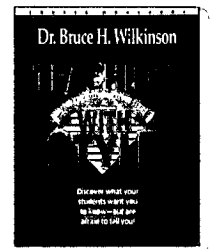
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APPOINTED TO LEADERSHIP

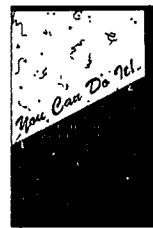
Edited by Jack Hayford
This book can help you minister more effectively. You will learn how to develop sensitivity to promptings of the Holy Spirit, understand the need for a godly lifestyle, encourage faith in others, and deepen the roots of your ministry in a vital relationship with God.

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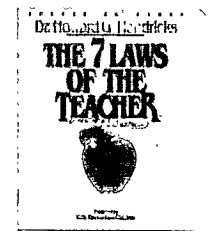
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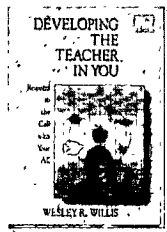
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DEVELOPING THE TEACHER IN YOU

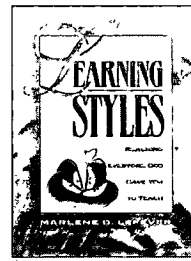
by Wesley R. Willis
The purpose of this book is to help you become a better teacher than you are right now. Each chapter is divided into three sections: Insight on Ministry, Insight from the Word, and Insight on Teaching.

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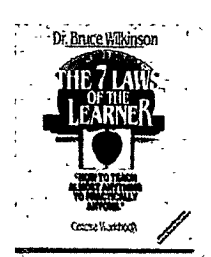
LEARNING STYLES

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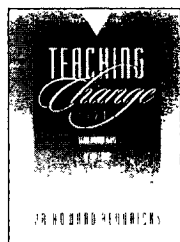
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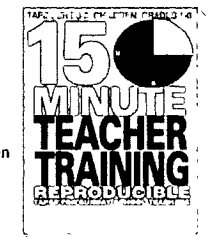
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Idea Share

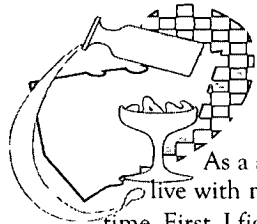
Ideas for teaching children

Spinning Art

Items needed:

- A record player with a working turn table
- Paper plates
- Tempura paints mixed in squeeze bottles
- Protective covering for walls, floors and clothing

Set up the record player on a low table. On the back of each paper plate, print the child's name. Place a paper plate on the turntable. Turn the record player on. Let the child use one or more of the bottles to gently squeeze paint onto the spinning paper plate. Allow time to dry.



MAKING DINNER FUN AND WORTHWHILE

Mark Littleton

As a single dad with two young daughters who live with me, I'm very aware of the rigors of dinner time. First, I figure out what to eat. I have a repertoire of about 15 meals I've perfected that I offer in our kitchen. All of them are simple, fast and easy to prepare. None of them takes more brains than a bean sprout has to put together. (I also use fast food restaurants in the area as backups.)

But we don't focus on food. I feel a strong need to instruct my kids in spiritual things as we eat. We've begun memorizing verses of Scripture together. We've done *Psalm 119:11, I John 1:9, John 3:16 and Philippians 1:6*. I've actually been amazed to see the girls compete, each vying to be first to recite it. For me, it's easier than using a devotional guide, many of which I found too childish for the 11-year-old and too difficult for the 6-year-old. The verses give the kids something to remember and use.

After we repeat and discuss the memory verses, we pray. I keep a notebook in which we write on one page "We Ask" and on the opposite page, "He Answers." Each night as we pray, we look over the past week's prayers and if God answered in any way, we write it down and thank him. In this way, we've collected many answers that show God's faithfulness.

You can impact your kids' spiritual lives even if you're a non-custodial dad. When they come to visit review the verses you learned last time and go through your prayer journal. Thank God for his answers to prayer. It's become a kind of snapshot album of our prayer lives together. It's helped my kids realize how powerful faith is and what it can do in our lives.

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DIRECTIONS FOR FOURSQUARE CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS is published quarterly by the National Department of Christian Education and Foursquare Publications, P.O. Box 26902, Los Angeles, CA 90026. (213)484-2400. If you have news or events to share, please contact us.



It's Sunday afternoon. You've dragged yourself home after an extremely challenging morning. You've just stretched out on the couch for a much-needed nap when Ralph—your Junior High Boys substitute teacher—calls to complain about someone messing up the supply cabinet...two weeks ago!

He's furious. And he expects you to hear about it.

We all face angry volunteers from time to time, and they often take us by surprise. Following are 10 tips to diffuse a furious situation:

- 1 Do not express anger yourself, even if the encounter angers you.
- 2 Let Ralph tell you why he is angry.
- 3 Give him your full attention. Ask questions.
- 4 If it is your fault, say you are sorry.
- 5 If it is not your fault, say you are sorry.
- 6 Let Ralph know you understand the problem by restating it.
- 7 Let Ralph know what you will do to help.
- 8 Let Ralph know when you will work on the problem.
- 9 Keep Ralph informed about progress...or lack of it.
- 10 Thank Ralph for bringing the problem to your attention.

If you absolutely cannot deal with Ralph at the time he desires, respectfully tell him so—and tell him when you will contact him to discuss it. Then do it.

Reprinted from: *Handling Angry Volunteers*. A Higher Standard Newsletter. Standard Publishing, Spring 1995.



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