

DIRECTIONS

►► CONNECTING... *Nurturing Relationships*

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The Sunday School teachers in my rural home church were not exceptionally trained or religiously sophisticated. The materials they gave us to use often came from their closets. The lessons they taught to us each week were developed from the teacher's manuals mixed with their own experiences. We children lacked for nothing, because those teachers possessed the most essential teaching skill of all: making us feel loved by God and the congregation.

The most important part of our work as Christian educators is to listen, support, and help people care for each other and to speak kindly to one another.

Teachers committed to nurturing relationships connect intimately with those who come to learn. Ways to establish that connectedness relates to the four cardinal relational needs of people: to feel understood, to understand, to sense one's belonging, and to find hope.

JESUS ALWAYS CREATED AN ENVIRONMENT FOR UNDERSTANDING:

People come to church wanting to feel understood. They sense when their feelings are cared for and when others are truly concerned about whether they live or die.

Therefore, teaching involves a great deal of listening. Listening is life-giving. It assures people that someone is genuinely interested in them. It helps the teacher appreciate what people are experiencing in their lives so the teacher can respond with greater empathy in teaching.

EXPANDING OTHERS' UNDERSTANDING:

People are seeking explanations that give meaning to their lives. They look for explanations that give order to life, ideas that call them to new vision and to help them see new opportunities. People feel they belong when there's time to socialize, overcome loneliness, or find a kindred soul. However the atmosphere has to be right.

A sense of belonging lays a solid foundation for understanding. A teacher can rejoice when people experience the love of Jesus and the love of the crowd around them.

INSTRUCTING FOR HOPE:

People are searching for hope. Teaching is an act of encouragement when it helps people reclaim hope. Hopeful statements of faith can give a mood of expectancy that uplift people and move them to try again. Focus teaching on consistently encouraging people to reclaim hope by facing stressful situations with the hope-filled words of the Christian faith.

As you are planning for personnel, facilities, curriculum and budget, be encouraged! You are not alone - we are connected to the greatest source of all -- **JESUS CHRIST!**

Rick Wulfestieg

"Jesus sent his twelve harvest hands out with this charge: 'Go to the lost, confused people right here in the neighborhood. Tell them that the kingdom is here. Bring health to the sick.... You have been treated generously, so live generously.... you don't need a lot of equipment. You are the equipment....'"
Matthew 10 from The Message

The WHY? of Discipleship

EP News Service reports that "CHRISTIANITY IS A FAITH AT RISK," according to a new nationwide survey conducted by the Barna Research Group. Examining 13 measures used annually to evaluate the health and stability of evangelical Christianity in America, the organization reported that three measures experienced a decline from the previous year; nine were statistically unchanged; and just one measure improved.

The three measures which declined were:

Bible reading

Adult Sunday School attendance

Identification as Protestant

One measure which showed increase was the number of adults involved in a small group which meets for Bible study, prayer or Christian fellowship. Among other findings:



Baby Boomers are the generation most likely to hold "born again" beliefs. However, they are also increasingly inactive in their faith, demonstrating declining levels of church attendance, Sunday school participation and Bible reading.



Bible reading during the week is lowest among the BABY - BUSTER generation. Currently under 30 years of age, only 21 percent of the Busters read the Bible during the week, just half the level of people 65 or older.



Only half of the people who attend a church service during the week also read the Bible during the week, other than while they are at church.

George Barna, president of the company which conducted the research, found the results sobering. "I believe we are at a critical crossroads for Christianity in America. A mass movement cannot sustain its strength amidst public indifference to the goals, demands and products of the movement. The next several years may well determine the vitality of the Christian faith in the nation for the next several decades."



Leading a Child to Christ

1. What can the young child understand about accepting Jesus as his or her Savior?

The young child is easily attached to Jesus. When young children see a picture of Jesus they see a warm, sympathetic, compassionate Person who obviously loves children, and the children readily like Him. These early perceptions form the foundations preparing the child to receive Christ as Savior and desire to follow His example in godly living. While some children at this age level (especially from Christian homes) may indeed pray to become a member of God's family, accepting Jesus as their personal Savior, expect wide variations in children's readiness for this important step. Allow the Holy Spirit room to work in His own timetable.

2. What does the child need to know about salvation?

Here are some key points to make sure children know:

- a. God loves you.
- b. We have all done wrong things and have sinned.
- c. God says that sin must be punished.
- d. God sent Jesus to take the punishment for your sin.
- e. Tell God you are sorry for sinning.
- f. Ask Jesus to be your Savior.
- g. Now you are a member of God's family.

3. What guidelines should I follow in talking with a child about becoming a Christian?

Be familiar with God's Word - it is powerful. Mark these verses: John 3:16; Romans 3:23, 5:6; I Corinthians 15:3; I John 4:14. Use the clearest version you have available.

Be careful to avoid symbolic words. Phrases such as "born again," or "ask Jesus into your heart" are beyond the understanding of young children. Briefly explain key terms. **Sin** means doing wrong things or disobeying God's rules; **saved** - to become a part of God's family; **forgive** - to take away the punishment for doing wrong things; **everlasting life** - to live now and forever with Jesus.

Talk individually with children. Something as important as a child's personal relationship with Jesus Christ can be handled more effectively alone than in a group. A child needs to respond individually to the call of God's love. This response needs to be a genuine response to God-not because the child wants to please peers, parents or you, the teacher.

Your Church - A Safe Place For Children?

Bitter reality reminds us of the the possibility of child abuse occurring in our church programs. Usually, we have enough challenges finding volunteers to work in ministry areas. However, lawsuits against churches for alleged or actual child molestation have risen enormously in recent years. In fact, churches are seen as easy targets for child molesters because we give access to children with little screening or supervision. Unfortunately, most churches only deal with this issue after they have had to confront a situation within their church.

Each church needs to have a child abuse awareness and prevention plan in place. The following steps are ways we can help prevent child abuse or a false allegation of abuse.

An area that churches are often found liable is in failing to screen volunteers who are recruited to work with minors. All volunteers given access to children ages 18 and under should go through a process of screening procedures.

1. **VOLUNTEER APPLICATION.** See sample form next page. (An application should be completed and kept on file for every volunteer in the church who works with minors. It's important to keep these applications confidential and updated every few years.)

2. **VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW.** All potential volunteers should also be interviewed by a designated church leader. This interview should include the question "Have you ever been convicted of child abuse or a crime involving actual or attempted sexual molestation of a minor?" Brief written notes of the interview should be taken and kept confidential along with the application.

Two crucial goals are served by accomplishing the screening process:

- The church fulfills its LEGAL REQUIREMENTS to screen volunteers;
- You let potential child abusers know that YOUR CHURCH IS EDUCATED AND AWARE.

3. **VOLUNTEER REFERENCES.** For volunteers who are new to your church or unknown to church leaders, the references on the volunteer application should be checked. It is important to verify the information and to ask if there is any reason this individual should not be allowed to work with minors.

The following APPLICATION FORM FOR SERVICE and CRIMINAL RECORDS AND AUTHORIZATION sample forms are provided and may be customized for your church. NOTE: You may add, not delete from these forms! These are the minimum legal requirements.

"REDUCING THE RISK," a complete resource recommended by El Clark, Foursquare legal counsel, includes video, training kit, audio cassette, and complete guidebook, \$49.95. Order today from Foursquare Publications (800) 992-7444.

REQUEST FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK AND AUTHORIZATION

I hereby request the _____ Police Department to release any information which pertains to any record of conviction contained in its files or in any criminal file maintained on me whether local, state, or national. I hereby release said Police Department from any and all liability resulting from such disclosure.

Signature _____ Today's Date _____

Print Name _____

Maiden name if applicable _____

Print all aliases _____

Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth _____

Social Security Number _____

Record sent to:

Name _____

Address _____

APPLICATION FOR CHILDREN'S/YOUTH WORK

Confidential
Church Name

Personal

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. It is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment of those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

Date: _____

Name: _____
Last First Middle

**Identity must be confirmed with a state driver's license or other photographic identification.*

Present Address: _____

Home Phone: () _____

What type of children/youth work do you prefer? _____

On what date would you be available? _____

Minimum length of commitment: _____

Have you ever been convicted of child abuse or a crime involving actual or attempted sexual molestation of a minor? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, please explain (attach a separate page, if necessary): _____

Were you a victim of abuse or molestation while a minor? Yes _____ No _____ If you prefer, you may discuss your answer to this question with the senior minister rather than answering it on the form. Answering yes, or leaving the question unanswered, will not automatically disqualify an applicant for children or youth work.

Do you have a current driver's license? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, please list your driver's license number.

Have you ever been convicted of a traffic offense? Yes _____ No _____ If yes, please describe all convictions of the past 5 years.

Church Activity

Name of church of which you are a member: _____

List (name and address) other churches you have attended regularly during the past five years: _____

List all previous church work involving youth (identify church and type of work): _____

List any gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for children/youth work: _____

Personal References (not former employers or relatives)

Name: _____ Name: _____

Address: _____ Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Telephone: _____

Applicant's statement

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give you any information including opinions that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children/youth work. I release all such references from any liability for furnishing such evaluations to you, provided they do so in good faith and without malice. I waive any right that I may have to inspect references provided on my behalf.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Bylaws and policies of (church name), and to refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.

Applicant's signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____

Note: Do not omit any of these questions from this form, this has been carefully created for the church's legal covering!

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION?

Effective Christian education - Small groups, Sunday school, etc. should help people make sense out of life!

It is the process of sharing the Christian story and truth (**INFORMATION**) thereby being shaped by Christian values, attitudes, and lifestyles (**FORMATION**) and fostering change of persons, communities, and structure (**TRANSFORMATION**) by the power of the Holy Spirit to a fuller expression of God's reign through Jesus Christ.

WHAT IS THE PRIMARY WORK OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATIONAL LEADER?

The leadership function of the CE leader is to shape the values of those who teach! To excel, a leader must be clear on what CE stands for, (changed lives helping to change lives) and take the process of value-shaping seriously. In the most successful companies or ministries certain values permeate the structure, giving direction to staff and programs. At Disneyland great efforts are made to have every employee understand the purpose of business - **TO MAKE PEOPLE HAPPY!** In Christian Education our purpose is - **TO BRING PEOPLE TO JESUS - SO THEY WOULD KNOW HIM AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN!**

HOW WILL TEACHERS AND WORKERS CATCH OUR VISION?

* **MAKE USE OF WHAT IS AVAILABLE** - Often teachers/CE workers want to improve education by making better students, and students want to improve the process by getting better teachers. We must start with the resources we have been given. Consequently, we should focus on teacher development rather than teacher replacement.

* Give teacher training and affirmation top priority.

* Nurture the character and spiritual lives of the teacher

* Take modeling seriously. Encourage teachers to be open with their students about how they seek to live their life faithfully before God in the midst of difficulties and setbacks.

* Choose a curriculum for its ability to help teachers teach biblical and doctrinal truth rather than for its eye appeal.

* Above all, we should be guiding our teachers/CE workers into a search for meaning through the Scriptures and relationship with Jesus Christ and others. RW



Questions & Answers To Think About...

Q: What motivated Robert Raikes to found the Sunday School movement in Gloucester, England in 1780?

A: The crude behavior of the children in the streets.

Q: What did Robert Raikes believe was the answer to the dilemma of bad behavior?

A: He believed preventing a problem was easier than curing it, so he turned to education. The children's needs moved his heart, compelling him to action.

Q: What approach did Raikes use to begin the Sunday School movement?

A: He recruited help. He found a woman who opened her home to children from poor families. Every Sunday they met for reading, writing and arithmetic, using the Bible as a key textbook.

Q: How is your society similar to that of Robert Raikes' day?

A: Many parallels exist, such as the uncontrolled behavior of many children in the streets, schools, and other public places.

Q: Is it possible to have a dynamic Sunday School movement in 1995 and beyond?

A: Yes, but only if the leaders/workers recapture the joy of missions. This is accomplished as we discover the most effective way to meet needs and carry out the Great Commission in our contemporary society. It begins with a heart concerned for the unsaved people around us and prayer for God's direction.

Q: What is the purpose of the Sunday School?

A: The fourfold purpose is: to reach people, to teach people, to disciple people, and to help them grow in Christ-likeness.

Q: Is Sunday School related to church growth?

A: George Barna's research reveals that three out of five growing churches in 1993 had a strong adult Sunday School ministry. Sunday morning Bible study targets both adults and children.

Q: Can small groups (as a method of community and instruction) be developed through the Sunday School?

A: Yes...if...the right things (Bible study, teaching methods, personal care) happen in an intentional and planned way.

Adapted. W. Talmade Johnson for Insight Newsletter, Summer 1995

PASTOR TAKES THE LEAD WITH GOOD NEWS BEARS

Pastor Jeff Stoddard came to Bishop and saw a real need in the fall of 1994. There were only four kids! He got started with the Good News Bears club and combined all age levels on a Wednesday night. With help from the National Office it began to work. His comment was, "Don't get hung up on all the age levels. Work with what you have, adapt."

Pastor Jeff is shown with a group of children following a water baptismal. Fifteen were baptized with a full understanding of obedience and who Jesus is.

For more information on how to start a GOOD NEWS BEARS CHILDREN MINISTRY, call (213) 484-2400, ext. 300, or your District CE Representative.



How about these statistics?

1. If both your parents worshipped with you regularly while you were growing up, there's an 80 percent chance that you will worship God regularly as an adult.
2. If only your mother worshipped with you regularly, there's only a 30 percent probability that you'll worship regularly as an adult.
3. If only your father worshipped with you regularly the chances of you attending worship regularly increase to 70 percent.

Fathers have an enormous impact on their childrens' faith and values. One of your most important ministries is worshipping with your kids.

From The Free Press, September, 1994.

An excerpt from...

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit Promised and Revealed

Jesus promised in John 14:16, "I will pray to the Father and He will give you ANOTHER Helper, the Spirit of truth, Whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him: but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you."

When Jesus spoke these words He was saying there would come ANOTHER of the same kind. The world ANOTHER shows similarities but diversities of operation and ministries. Jesus' use of the word *ALLOS* for sending another Comforter equals "one besides Me and in addition to Me but one just like Me. He will do in My absence what I would do if I would were physically present with you." The Holy Spirit's coming reveals to you and me the continuity of what Jesus taught and modeled.

"Lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the ages." (Matthew 28:20)

As you pray and prepare to minister these truths, allow the Holy Spirit to reveal Himself to you and those He has entrusted to your care.

Available from Foursquare Publications!

An excellent resource for teaching children (ages 9-12) about the Holy Spirit. Call: 1-800-992-7444.

DIRECTIONS FOR FOURSQUARE CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS is a resource published quarterly by the National Department of Christian Education, 1910 W. Sunset Blvd., #200, Los Angeles, CA 90026. If you have any news or events to share please contact us.