

**3** ROLES *for guiding groups*

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# LEADER

*creating commissioned community*

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 **LifeWay**  
Biblical Solutions for Life

David Francis Allan Taylor Ken Braddy

**3** ROLES *for guiding groups*

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— *creating commissioned community* —



*David Francis Allan Taylor Ken Braddy*

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# Introduction

## *Creating Commissioned Community*

If you lead a Sunday School or weekly Bible study group, you know successful groups include a teacher, shepherd, and leader.<sup>1</sup> The teacher creates a conversational community. The shepherd creates a caring community. The leader creates a commissioned community. These three things are the foundation of an effective Sunday School or small group ministry. There are various ways to express “the big three.” We have written much about them (the Appendix of this book provides an overview of “the big three”). Every leader should understand and embrace them. For the purpose of this book, we are going to focus on the one that gets the least attention. It is the proverbial elephant in the room:

**The hard task of reaching people is often crowded out by teaching and ministering.**

The purpose of this book is to provoke a conversation about outreach and evangelism through Sunday School and Bible study groups. Between the three of us, we have written a ton of stuff on leading the Bible study ministry of a church. The books mentioned in the back of this book plus Ken’s insightful blog articles ([kenbraddy.com](http://kenbraddy.com)) will provide all the material you need to better understand the role of leader in a comprehensive way. In this book, we want to focus on one aspect of leading:

**It’s time to have serious conversations about reaching people through Sunday School classes and small group ministries.**

We hope every bolded statement provokes some part of that conversation. These conversations need to happen. And be acted on. Some conversations may be more interesting or applicable to you and your group than others. So feel free to skip around.

Although these conversations are at least a little random, we do have a framework to organize them: Practices, Principles, and Perspectives. We identified 20 of each. You can read—and have a conversation about—any of the 60 in any order. Even backwards!

**20 Perspectives** (chapter 3) answers the “where” question – where have we been, where are we, and where are we heading? It takes a look at evangelism and the Sunday School through the historical lens of the past, present, and future. It is intended to be informational. It is intended to be motivational and maybe a little convictional.

**20 Principles** (chapter 2) answers the “what?” question. There are some basic “laws” of Sunday School that provide the foundation for how we approach outreach and evangelism.

**20 Practices** (chapter 1) answers the “how?” question. The flow of most books is usually from why/where to what to how. Unfortunately, “how” gets crowded out. Sort of like reaching gets crowded out. Not by bad things. By other good things. So, for the purpose of this little book, “how” is going to trump “where” and “what.”

You are more than welcome to read the chapters in reverse order. Read it in any order you want! More importantly, talk about it with each other. Have conversations. Not debates. Approach the conversation with the goal of answering this question:

**“What would God have us do to create a  
commissioned community?”**

Note: We will use the term “Sunday School” extensively. If you call your group ministry by some other term, just substitute that name every time you read “Sunday School.”

# Chapter 1

## 20 Practices

You can't always count on feeling or thinking your way into action. Sometimes you need to act yourself into feeling and thinking. We believe that is probably true of outreach and evangelism through the Sunday School. Are there some best practices among churches and classes that demonstrate an outward focus? Yes. The more you say "yes," the more likely it is that your Sunday School class or Bible study group focuses outwardly, too. We find 20 essential practices in Sunday Schools and groups that are evangelistic and outward-focused.

### Practice 1. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups are led by teams of outward-focused leaders.

The ultimate trait of leadership is not great speeches, great organizational skill, or great charisma. The ultimate leadership attribute is example! What's important to leaders eventually becomes important to followers.

The three roles found in a Sunday School class are teaching, leading/reaching, and shepherding/ministering. So, ideally, each class will have at least three leaders, each concentrating on one of the roles...to make sure it is a priority! Applied to an adult class, the organization might look something like this:

Adult Class Organization		
Leader	Teacher	Shepherd
Social Leader Care Group Leader	Apprentice Care Group Leader	Care Group Leader
Hospitality Leader Care Group Leader	Care Group Leader	Prayer Leader Care Group Leader
Missions Leader Care Group Leader		Ministry Leader Care Group Leader
Care Group Leader		Care Group Leader

Notice the shared titles. They represent these complementary truths:

- *Every adult class needs to do the work represented by each of these positions.*
- *There may not be enough people to fill just one position.*
- *So some leaders will have to double up!*

Perhaps the social and hospitality leaders are the same person. If there is not a social leader or hospitality leader, the outreach leader is that leader. If there is not an outreach leader, the teacher is the outreach leader. If there are no care group leaders, the ministry leader is the care group leader. You get the idea! And, in this model, many leaders double up as a care group leader.

In a class for kids or students, the norm is to “double up.” If there are three teachers in a preschool room, for example, one will emerge as the “lead teacher,” usually conducting the “group time.” Another will take the primary responsibility for reaching, and the third for shepherding/ministry. What if there are only two workers? Then someone will have to “double up!” All three may double up as care group leaders.

## Practice 2. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups have an outreach leader.

Every adult class should have a Class Outreach Leader and every Preschool, Children, and Student department should have a Department Outreach Leader. The job description for an outreach leader might look something like this:

- *Regularly share the gospel with others.*
- *Lead the group in the outreach/evangelism strategy.*
- *Train group members to share their faith.*
- *Enlist group members occasionally to share their faith story.*
- *Manage the group’s prospect list.*



### Practice 3. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups have a prospect list.

Prospects are people who are spiritually lost, unchurched, or attend worship services but do not attend Sunday School. Names are the essential element of the prospect list. What are the sources of names?

- *Those who attend your church*
- *Those who visit Sunday School*
- *Those who attend a special event at your church*
- *Families of children attending your Vacation Bible School*
- *Families of children participating in your church's sports programs*
- *People who come to the church for help with food, clothing, bills, etc.*
- *Family, friends, work associates, schoolmates, and neighbors of church members*
- *People you meet and serve through community projects*
- *People you discover by canvassing houses and neighbors surrounding the church*

If you don't have a name and some type of means of contact, you do not have a prospect. You don't reach nameless people. Make sure you register guests and attenders at every opportunity. You cannot make a contact without contact information.

### Practice 4. Evangelistic, outwardly-focused groups practice open enrollment.

I (Ken) was recently reminded by a friend and colleague of ours, Dwayne McCrary, of the importance of enrolling people in groups. He reminded me that enrolling people in Bible study is an essential action that many groups have abandoned. I began thinking about the group I teach, a group of empty-nest adults, and wondered if our process for enrolling people could be strengthened. The wrong question to ask a guest is, "Would you fill out this information card?" The right question to ask a guest is, "May I enroll you in our Bible study group? You are not joining the church.

You are simply giving us permission to pray for you, contact you, and keep you informed about fellowship and ministry opportunities of the group.”

Groups that practice what is known as “open enrollment” literally enroll people in the group any time and any place—not just when the person visits the group Bible study time. Groups that practice open enrollment ask for a commitment the first time the guest visits the group or before they ever attend.

### Practice 5. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups pray for people by name.

The catalytic moment for groups becoming outwardly focused often occurs as attention turns from themselves to others. And not just prayer requests for other people’s jobs, physical health, or finances, but their souls. How sweet is the sound of people praying for lost husbands, wives, children, family, and friends? If your group normally focuses its prayers on the group members, begin adding people to the prayer list who are far from God. Pray for them by name, and ask God to use you and the group to nudge them closer to Him.

### Practice 6. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups have members who maintain a personal prospect prayer list.

In an outwardly-focused group, members begin thinking about their spheres of influence and the people in those spheres who need Christ as Savior. You can use a journal or small notebook for this purpose. Update your personal prospect prayer list regularly. These categories may help you understand what to include on the list:

- **Identify.** *Name(s), contact information, interests, work, family, background, important dates, skills.*
- **Intercede.** *Needs: physical, relational, vocational, spiritual.*
- **Invest.** *Notes about how you and/or others have demonstrated care and concern.*

- **Invite.** *A record of when you've invited them and what you've invited them to or plan to.*
- **Involve.** *Reminders celebrating how they got connected.*

## Practice 7. Harvesting names is a primary purpose for all special events.

Your group is outwardly focused when you use special events, fellowships, day trips, and ministry projects to gather potential group members' names and information. These groups never schedule a fun event without inviting all of their prospects. Group members need to think about people in their spheres of influence whom they could invite to an event sponsored by the group. People tend to quickly say “yes” to fun events like cookouts, bowling nights, road trips, and the like. During the event, take a moment to get their contact information. Better yet, practice “open enrollment” and ask them to allow you to make them an official part of the group the first time they participate.

Larger classes may have a leader responsible for planning social activities. This person might also serve as the class Hospitality Leader. Whether it is one person or more, the leader(s) should be accountable to the Outreach Leader. Preferably, they are enlisted by him or her. So who is responsible for social activities outside of class and hospitality within the class if you don't have a leader or leaders to do that? You guessed it! The Outreach Leader! Why the Outreach Leader? Because parties are opportunities for outreach—as well as fun for the members.

Outward-focused groups also take advantage of church-wide special events. Vacation Bible School is the best example. One of every four baptisms in Southern Baptist churches is the direct or indirect fruit of VBS. Have you considered inviting parents to your class? Have you asked for the names of the parents so you could contact them? How can you get the names of the unchurched kids so your class can contact them?

## Practice 8. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups create “excuses” to invite people.

Bring-a-Friend Day, High Attendance Day, Super Bowl fellowship night, Fall Festival, a chili cook-off, a golf tournament, or a Mother’s Day luncheon are just a few examples of events you could use as “excuses” for inviting prospects to attend an event with the higher goal of inviting them to attend worship and Bible study. How can you use the events planned by your church as an “excuse” to get to know a potential group member or to enroll a person into your group?

## Practice 9. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups have a specific “people group” to reach.

I (Allan) call this “Demographic Compatibility.” People seek relationships and groups that are compatible with their own life stage and situation. Sunday School is perfectly positioned to reach people through age-graded and life-stage groups.

The name of your group should give the guest a clue as to who your class is designed to reach. Names such as the Williams class, parlor class, the Dorcas class, etc. may confuse a guest. They don’t know if that class is for them or not. Names that describe the group are best: Grades 1-3, retired men, couples with college kids, empty-nesters average age 55, young married adults without kids, middle school boys, etc. The name also reminds the group who they are commissioned to reach.

## Practice 10. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups follow a deliberate process and plan to reach out to assigned prospects.

When people visit a church service or special event, Sunday School groups take the lead in building relationships, ministering to needs, and sharing the gospel. No other ministry in the church is positioned like a Sunday School class to cultivate relationships with prospects.

So, how does a class go about cultivating their prospects? One I (Allan) have used successfully is built off the letters “MTV.” Each week the class contacts prospects by rotating three methods:

- *Mail.* A group member mails them a handwritten note.
- *Telephone.* A group member phones them.
- *Visit.* A team from the group visits them.

Oftentimes, it will take more than three weeks and three contacts to reach unchurched and unsaved people. So, what do you do? Just keep rotating through the MTV Strategy.<sup>2</sup>

MTV gives the class an intentional way to cultivate prospects. The prospect receives three types of touches. This approach allows you to be involved where most comfortable. Start there, but challenge yourself to grow. Go with a team to make a visit and serve as their prayer support. Observe the questions they ask and how they guide the conversation. Work toward becoming a person who can lead a team on a visit.

### Practice 11. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups do not give up on people.

*“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?” (Luke 15:8, emphasis added).*

How long should we continue to witness, invite, minister, and cultivate lost sheep?” “Until we find them!” We need to be active in the church, but we need to be just as active outside the church.

### Practice 12. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups schedule time to focus on reaching others.

You can tell whether a Bible study group is committed to all three purposes of the Sunday School (reaching, teaching, ministering) by observing how an actual Bible study session works. A group that is committed to reaching others will include in the group time a way of

supporting outreach and evangelism. Nothing says “We care about reaching out” like sharing strategies, gathering reports, and making assignments. This should be a fast-paced, well-planned, no-nonsense time anticipated by the group. If there are guests present, members will want to introduce guests to the group...even if they just met them.

### **Practice 13. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups are intentional about making guests feel welcome.**

Groups place chairs near the door for guests. They make sure guests are given curriculum materials so they can participate with the group. Some members may even share their Bible with a guest. They make sure guests are given prompts as to what to do during the group time. Nametags help.

An empty chair is a constant reminder that newcomers are welcome and expected. Even if the room is packed, an outward-focused group will find a place for an empty chair. The chair serves as a symbol that there is always room for someone else.

If there are no guests present, sometimes it is prudent to talk about how the group should act when guests do attend. This does two things. First, it ensures that the group understands how to treat guests well. Second, it reminds everyone to invite someone to attend the group!

### **Practice 14. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups extend invitations.**

Outreach can be as simple as an invitation. You don't have to be a Bible scholar; you just need to be friendly. In John 1:39 we find Jesus inviting two of His future disciples with a simple invitation: “Come and see.” In turn, Philip told Nathanael about Jesus. Nathanael had doubts saying, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Philip then offered the simple invitation: “Come and see” (v. 46).

The members of outwardly-focused groups have recaptured the simple act of an invitation. They want to give even skeptical people the opportunity to “come check it out.”

An invitation is more likely to be accepted when it is extended by people with something in common. For example, no one can connect with a high school student like another high school student. No one can connect with a young mother like another young mother. Outreach is greatly enhanced when people “in the same boat” extend a friendly invitation.

## Practice 15. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups “do the math” and know key statistics.

One of my (David’s) all time favorite resources is *The Church Growth Ratio Book: How to have a Revitalized, Healthy, Growing, Loving Church*.<sup>3</sup> In it, Win Arn identifies several research-derived ratios that savvy groups and churches are constantly aware of in their efforts to reach people.

**5:100.** At least 5% of worship service attenders are guests from the church’s primary ministry area. They know that for every one hundred people in attendance, there ought to be at least five local guests. Relatives attending from out of town should be treated well. But they don’t count against the five! You need to average 5% from the primary ministry area (PMA). So, it follows that you need to know your PMA. It could be the city or county limits. It could be the local school district. It could be a certain drive time. It can be affected by topography (hills or rivers) or infrastructure (roads or bridges). One rule of thumb is to ask, “Would I drive from the church to visit this guest?” If you would, then they are part of the five!

**1:4** One of every four first-time guests are assimilated into the church within a year. Arn’s studies indicated that churches that are plateaued or slightly declining assimilate about 10–12% of first-time guests. Slightly growing churches reach 14–16%. Significant growth happens at 25% or a ratio of one to four.

**1:1.** First-time worship service guests respond well to being contacted immediately and personally. You can almost not do this too soon—or too personally. One California pastor saw a dramatic increase in the number of first-time guests who completed and turned in a “guest card” when he began to say something like this:

*If you are a guest for the first time today, we would be so encouraged to know you're here. If you're back again, we'd be so delighted to know you're back! There is a lot of stuff on the guest card. You don't need to fill it all out. Just give us what you're comfortable with. Just your name will be a great encouragement—we'd like to pray for you. We know why people don't give us all the information. They are afraid we will misuse it. I promise you we won't. In fact, if you'll go one step further and give us your phone number, I'll tell you exactly what I am going to do. I am going to call you. I'm thinking about a 7-minute conversation. I'd like to learn two things: a little about you and what you are looking for in a church.*

The number of guest cards submitted grew. But one thing did not go as planned. The conversations lasted 2-3 times longer than the allocated seven minutes!

This contacting can be done by people other than the pastor. In fact, people know calling is part of his job. If a contact is made by a church member, the value of that contact may actually go up. Even better would be for a guest to get two calls!

**3:4.** Three of every four returning guests are assimilated into the church within a year. Arn reminds us that those who come back a second, third, or fourth time are saying, “I am interested in you.” And asking, “Are you interested in me?” They are begging us to go after them!

A saying I (Allan) saw in a church many years ago still rings true:

*“Ain't hardly nobody been saved what ain't been went after!”*

That may be poor English, but it's true. Sunday School should be “assimilation ready.” When people attend and/or join a church, it is imperative that they are absorbed into the church body. How is that done? Through relationships. Where are those relationships built? In Sunday School. They may attend—and give—every week, but if they are not connected to other people they are not assimilated.

The church worship service is designed for our vertical relationship—man to God. Sunday School is designed for our horizontal relationships—people to people. Relationships are always best accommodated in smaller groups of people.



## Practice 16. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups contact prospects with a sense of urgency.

Once someone visits a class or group, they have taken a significant first step. The teacher or outreach leader should personally follow up with first-time guests. The sooner the follow-up contact is made, the more likely the guest is to return. There is a sense of urgency in the contact and if the outreach leader can't make a prompt contact, he or she makes sure someone in the group will make the contact in his or her stead.

## Practice 17. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups use the Personal Study Guide as an outreach tool as well as a resource for Bible study.

In every one of the Personal Study Guides produced for ongoing Bible study groups by LifeWay, a plan of salvation is prominent. You can find it on the inside cover of each Personal Study Guide (PSG). By placing it in this easy-to-find location, group leaders and group members always have an accessible, clear plan of salvation to share with someone who doesn't know Christ as Savior. You don't have to memorize it, necessarily. Simply turn to it, read through it with the other person, then ask, "Did you understand this?" Reread it if necessary and always give them an opportunity to respond.

These groups also take PSGs to prospects. It gives them an "excuse" to make a personal visit, removing some of the awkwardness. They show them how to use the resource to get the prospect up to speed. They know they are helping others understand God's Word even if the prospect never attends the group.

## Practice 18. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups "franchise" themselves.

Most adult classes will reach a saturation point within 24 months of their beginning. They will replace members. But they will stay about the same size after two years. So new classes must be started regularly. Rather than thinking of it as "splitting a class" or "birthing a new group," think of it

as “franchising.” When companies want to reach new people, they don’t tear down an existing point of sale and build one twice as big—they simply franchise themselves and open a new place of business. Bible study groups can do the same thing—reach new people making room for both the new and the old to be successful.

The advantages of starting new groups are many:

- *New groups narrow the age-division of classes, giving everyone a more targeted demographic to pursue.*
- *New groups can help classes better address the issues related to a particular life-stage. Groups can really zero in on the burning issues of their members.*
- *New groups provide a fresh start. Many people do not attend because of a negative past experience.*
- *New groups provide a place for people to connect relationally. Let’s be honest. Sometimes longer-tenured groups have a social structure that is difficult to penetrate. They don’t intend to keep people out of their social structure, it’s just that it becomes well developed over time. New groups have not developed these strong social ties so it is much easier to get connected socially.*
- *New groups give biblically challenged people an easier entry point. Some people do not attend Sunday School because they do not know the Bible. The thought of attending a group with lots of seasoned Christians can be very intimidating. They assume that tenured groups have people that have attended long enough to be well ahead of them in biblical knowledge. A new group often communicates that others are starting near their level; so they find it easier to attend.*

**Practice 19. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups help start new classes for preschoolers, children, and students regularly.**

**4:10.** Four of every ten persons in attendance will be in a class for kids. This four to ten ratio includes the leaders as well as the preschoolers, children, and middle school and high school students. If more than six in ten are in adult classes, the future of your church may be in jeopardy. In a typical church, 12-15% of the weekly attendance are in preschool rooms, 12-15% are in rooms for children, and 12-15% are in student classes.

Because of differences from church to church, the 36-45% range usually lands somewhere around a center-cut number of about 40%.

Starting new groups for all ages is important. Adult groups must release and send out missionaries to start new groups for kids and students.

## Practice 20. Evangelistic, outward-focused groups know that one of every six adults in attendance is serving kids and students.

**1:6.** An average group of adults with 12 in attendance will have another two members who are teaching kids or students. A group with 18 in attendance will have another three. How many in a class with 24 in attendance? That's right: four. Some classes provide more than their share. Where this is true, it is often because the class has a culture that celebrates when members go out as "missionaries to kids." A group that wants to increase its impact on kids might do such things as:

- *Assign all "members in service" to a care group leader, who keeps the class up-to-date on the news and needs of its missionaries to kids and students.*
- *Maintain a display with the names of members who are serving with kids and students. Even better would be photos taken in the missionary's room.*
- *Invite all those serving with kids and students to all social activities.*
- *Offer to provide substitute teachers when your missionaries must be absent. Be sure to follow all policies established for the protection of kids and workers.*
- *Sponsor the room(s) used by your missionaries. Does it need furniture or equipment? Puzzles? Curriculum enhancements like music CDs, videos, or leader packs?*

We know there are other actions carried out by an outwardly-focused, evangelistic Sunday School class. Our goal was to identify the most common characteristics. You may find other key actions in what you track or evaluate: the number of opportunities group members have to share the gospel with others, the number of times they invited a person to attend the group, or the number of contacts made in a week (all contacts), and so forth. What gets tracked gets tackled!

## **Chapter 2**

### *20 Principles*

The 20 practices identified in Chapter 1 are borne out of a set of principles. Each practice must be done on purpose for that practice to be carried out over the long term. Without the principles, the practices will eventually become burdens. Few of us need another burden. Keeping the principle in mind helps us understand the reasons we do what we do in our classes. Each principle may speak into multiple practices and each practice may be impacted by several principles.

#### **Principle 1. Sunday School is the church organized to carry out the Great Commission.**

Historically, Southern Baptist churches utilize Sunday School to organize the church's evangelistic efforts. Over the past few years, we have seen a huge shift. The major emphasis today is fellowship, relationship, and connection. These are very important and vital to having a healthy group. However, the focus of these actions tends to be inward. In our opinion, many groups are out of balance. Evangelism is something we expect church staff to do, not something we the members are commissioned to do. Sunday Schools have been most effective when counted on to be the evangelism arm of the church.

#### **Principle 2. Great Commission churches have a Great Commission Sunday School.**

When a person is a fan of any college or university, everything about that person is somehow impacted. For example, clothing choices will be made based on the colors of their choice school and the colors of their choice school's rival. If a church is a Great Commission church, every part of that church will somehow reflect the Great Commission. Since the Sunday School is the largest organization in most churches, Great Commission churches will have Great Commission Sunday Schools and classes.

Every Sunday School class must see themselves as a “mission team.” Arthur Flake called the Sunday School the “outreaching agency” of the church.<sup>4</sup> He saw the Great Commission Sunday Schools and Great Commission churches as being one and the same. You cannot have one without the other.

### Principle 3. Sunday School is the church mobilized to carry out the Great Commission in groups.

In any organization, spiritual or secular, the work is best carried out in smaller groups. A big task is broken down in smaller, actionable steps that each group can accomplish. Sunday School already provides the church with small mission teams. Each group has a list of prospects to pursue specifically and intentionally. Mobilization requires us to be mobile, not sedentary. That is, we have to get out of our holy huddles and “go after people.”

### Principle 4. Sunday School has a mandate to reach the lost.

Is the Discipleship Ministry mandated to reach the lost? No. It is mandated to take those already reached and mature them in Christlikeness. Is the Choir mandated with the task to reach the lost? No. They are mandated to take those already reached and help them worship God and praise Him. Are our Committees mandated to reach the lost? No. They are mandated to see to the affairs of church life. Then if Sunday School does not reach the lost and unchurched who will? Nobody!

### Principle 5. Sunday School groups must own evangelism.

Every Sunday School class must understand their role in fulfilling the Great Commission. Evangelism is not just a task for the church’s pastors to carry out. Evangelism is everyone’s task! Even though we may not have the spiritual gift of evangelism, none of us are relieved of our responsibility

as a believer to share the gospel. In a similar way, just because we don't have the spiritual gift of giving we are not relieved of our responsibility to give our tithes and offerings. Every Sunday School class must own the responsibility of evangelism.

### **Principle 6. Sunday School is the church organized to carry out the Great Commission.**

The Great Commission calls on the church to do two things: make disciples as we go (evangelism) and teach them as we go (discipleship). This is a big task requiring everyone to be involved if the local church is going to fulfill this mission. The church must organize everyone so they can be involved in the Great Commission. Sunday School makes this possible, breaking down the Great Commission one class at a time. Sunday School classes are made up of individuals bound by a common cause. Through Sunday School, every believer can get involved in the Great Commission in some way.

### **Principle 7. All Christians are to actively share the gospel.**

God's will is that none should perish (2 Peter 3:9). Paul reminded his readers that people could not respond to the gospel unless they are told (Rom. 10:14). We must take the gospel to our friends, family, and neighbors. The gospel is not complicated—even a child can share the basics with accuracy. So if we do not share the gospel we are acting in opposition to God's command to "go and make disciples." We must take the next step and initiate a conversation about Jesus. Our goal should be that everyone becomes a disciple. Jesus commanded it.

### **Principle 8. Sunday School is the church energized to carry out the Great Commission.**

Sunday School classes that carry out the Great Commission, energize the larger body! Unfortunately, many of us have substituted an institutional

approach to evangelism over an individual approach. We invite people to large events. Once at the event, we stand with them and a host of others to hear a gospel presentation. We then wonder why they did not respond.

To the invited guest, the presentation was directed to the crowd, not necessarily to them personally. Of course, there are exceptions to this. But the point is, when individuals speak directly with individuals, the message becomes personal. I am grateful for all evangelistic efforts that are biblical and ethical, but if we depend upon the institutional approach to evangelism, we inadvertently excuse ourselves from our God-given call to give personal witness to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We cheat ourselves of the joy of sharing about our Savior and short-circuit the process that energizes our churches! There is just something special about personally leading someone to faith in Jesus!

### **Principle 9. Sunday School must have more than good intentions; it must have intentionality!**

We have good intentions, wanting to see people come to Christ and grow as disciples. But good intentions alone will not get the job done. We must be intentional. If we are to be organized to reach lost and unchurched people then we must have an intentional strategy.

Not having an intentional strategy assumes that an unintentional strategy works better. Or, it exposes that it is simply not a priority. Either way, not having an intentional plan leads to trouble!

### **Principle 10. Doing something is better than doing nothing.**

Unfortunately, some classes take the position that intentionally going after people doesn't work anymore. But the problem is, that position assumes doing nothing will be effective! There is no way a salesman would take that approach. Nor would a college football coach would recruit that way. Why have we allowed ourselves to be deceived?

Should classes have an intentional strategy to study the Scripture? Yes. That is why most classes have a particular curriculum of study that has a scope and sequence. Should a class have an intentional strategy to care for the members of the class? Yes. If we were the person with a need we would want to know that our class rallied around us. Then why shouldn't classes have an intentional strategy for the Great Commission?

### Principle 11. Evangelism must remain a priority for Sunday School.

If you starve anything long enough, it will die. If we ignore evangelism and how our classes can make it happen, we'll end up starving evangelism. We may have great fellowship, intense care for one another, and solid Bible teaching, but we are settling for less than the best if we ignore evangelism in our class or group.

### Principle 12. The easiest thing to ignore in most classes is evangelism.

In most Sunday School classes, Bible study is the first thing that gets handled. If there is no Bible study time, the group really doesn't have a reason to gather. While we are gathered, the needs of those present and our friends will also get some attention. It is only natural that we help those who we know and love, especially when they are sitting across the room from us. If we are not careful, we will simply let evangelism get crowded out. We don't mean for evangelism to get left out, it just happens.

### Principle 13. Evangelism was important to Jesus.

Evangelism ought to be the strong point of any Bible study group. Jesus reminded His hearers that He came to seek and to save the lost (see Luke 19:10). We find Him eating with tax collectors, asking for a drink from a woman with all kinds of relationship issues, and allowing a woman known as a sinner to pour ointment on His feet. He talked about reaching the lost and then put Himself into positions where He would be in contact



with those He came to save. If Jesus were leading a Sunday School class, imagine the kind of people he would have in that group!

### **Principle 14. Jesus expects His followers to share the gospel with others.**

All four Gospel writers record Jesus commissioning His followers to share the gospel where ever they went (compare Matt. 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, Luke 24:46-48, and John 20:21). Each Gospel writer expressed the number one priority Jesus had for His followers: carrying out His mission and ministry of reaching the lost! They fully understood that Jesus expected them to share the gospel.

### **Principle 15. God uses ordinary people to share the gospel.**

The Book of Acts shows that the early church took Jesus' commission seriously. Those men and women obeyed His command to share the good news with others. They had no seminary degrees. They'd taken no extended classes on the art of sharing. They simply told what they'd heard and seen. They relayed what they knew. And God used their obedience to turn the world right-side up.

### **Principle 16. People once hardened to the gospel and considered unreachable can become its champions.**

On several occasions Scripture records the boldness of the Apostle Paul in sharing the gospel (see Acts 26:24-32). In the beginning, Paul opposed the gospel and Jesus' followers (see Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2). The gospel message, however, ultimately changed his heart (see Acts 9:3-9). Jesus gave him a new mission in life (see Acts 9:1-18). He became one of the greatest proponents of the gospel the world has ever seen. He became the preacher to the Gentiles. His passion for sharing the gospel has had an impact on you and me!

## Principle 17. A catalyst usually keeps evangelism front and center.

A catalyst is defined as some person or thing that precipitates an event; a catalyst acts on something else to create a change. Could that be you? What if God wants to use you to be the catalyst who makes evangelism important in your Sunday School class or Bible study group? Unless someone takes action, it won't happen.

## Principle 18. Evangelism is about stewardship.

When we encounter a person we have never met, we have a choice. We can ask them about their family, interests, and work without asking anything about their beliefs. Or we can make it a point to bring Jesus into your conversation. People who look for opportunities to share realize that every person encountered is a divine appointment. Stewardship is more than giving money. It is also about relationships.

## Principle 19. Evangelism takes place “out there.”

The evangelistic mission of the Sunday School doesn't take place on Sundays. While we preach and teach the gospel during those hours, the real mission is “out there” beyond the church campus. The real mission takes place during the week. The mission begins the moment our car rolls off the church campus. As we leave the church facilities, we are entering our mission field. Evangelism takes place in the community “out there.”

## Principle 20. When we take the gospel to the lost around us, Jesus goes with us.

Jesus gave us a mission of sharing the gospel with people in our communities, families, and workplaces. Can this be a scary task? Absolutely! Do we do it alone? Never! Jesus promised to be with us always (see Matt. 28:20). Jesus had just given his disciples an evangelistic mission and commissioned them to be His ambassadors, His spokespersons, and His missionaries to a lost world. Were the disciples afraid and unsure?

Perhaps. But Jesus assured them, and us, that even though the task of evangelism seems daunting, He is with us. We never share the gospel alone. We never encounter someone by ourselves. He's right there in Spirit, giving us words to say, Scripture to share, and boldness to complete the conversation.

# Chapter 3

## *20 Perspectives*

Sunday School is a year-round ministry. Many ministries are seasonal. Sunday School stands ready and available fifty-two weeks a year. It is a sound, sturdy, and steadfast ministry. It is a consistent ministry. It is a dependable ministry.

Sunday School has many tasks to accomplish, but one of its primary tasks is evangelism. We don't need to invent a new wheel; we need to roll the one we've got! So, start using your Sunday School and get evangelism rolling!

As we continue to think about Sunday School's practices (chapter 1) and principles (chapter 2) related to evangelism, we need to focus our attention to some perspectives on Sunday School and evangelism. These perspectives are best understood in light of history.

We have arranged our thoughts around three different views or lenses: the past, the present, and the future. As in previous chapters, we will share twenty more ideas using the past, present, and future as our framework.

### *THE PAST*

**Perspective 1. Sunday School has been the modern church's best means for engaging people as witnesses of the gospel.**

If Sunday School were not the best means for involving people in evangelism, then what would be? The small group setting gives everyone an opportunity to get plugged in to the evangelistic/outreach efforts of their Bible study group.

We attend worship services, hear our pastors preach on evangelism and the Great Commission, and say, “Amen.” Now we know what to do—reach lost people. This may be all some people need to be a witness. But let’s be honest, most people need more than being told what to do, they need to know how to do it. They need accountability. They need encouragement. Sunday School provides the how!

### **Perspective 2. Sunday School has engaged more people in mission activity.**

The largest ministry in the church should carry the greatest mission of the church. To do otherwise would be illogical. Who in their right mind would have taken the number one commission of Jesus and relegated it to a small ministry? If evangelism is the priority we claim it is, then it stands to reason that we would place this responsibility on the shoulders of our largest ministry. And we did.

### **Perspective 3. Sunday School has come into contact with more people than other ministries.**

Simply put, Sunday School has touched more lives than any other ministry. Sunday School has met during “prime time” – Sunday morning. Sunday School has been organized to minister to every age group. And Sunday School has been tasked with reaching out to people. Sunday School has always been in “the people business.”

### **Perspective 4. Key leaders from the past recognized the important marriage of Sunday School and evangelism.**

Historically, Southern Baptists have utilized and employed Sunday School as the vehicle for evangelism. Historically, Southern Baptists have led other denominations in reaching lost people with the good news of Jesus Christ. These two facts are not coincidental! Sunday School enhances evangelism and evangelism enhances Sunday School.

Here are some quotes of Baptist Sunday School leaders through the years who saw and implemented the vision of evangelism through the Sunday School. Ask yourself if their words still ring true today. We believe they do!

**Arthur Flake** *The supreme business of Christianity is to win the lost to Christ. This is what churches are for. It was Christ's one supreme mission, according to His own words... Surely then the Sunday School must relate itself to the winning of the lost to Christ as an ultimate objective.*<sup>5</sup>

**P.E. Burroughs** *Winning to Christ holds central place in the Sunday School. Beyond all question the supreme business of the Sunday School is winning to Christ... We do well as Sunday School workers to face quietly and faithfully the question as to what in the work of the school shall hold first and commanding place in our thinking... If the Sunday School fails in winning to Christ, it fails in its main business.*<sup>6</sup>

**J.N. Barnett** *Evangelism is the chief work of a church... The Sunday School is the chief agency of a church in evangelism... A Sunday School provides a church with its greatest force for evangelism. In reaching the lost, in teaching the Bible, in putting the lost into the preaching service, in doing personal work, the Sunday School officers and teachers constitute a force that is regular and resultful.*<sup>7</sup>

**A.V. Washburn** *The Sunday Schools of our day are charged with the task of leading in reaching all prospects for the church.*<sup>8</sup>

**John T. Sisemore** *Sunday School is a church's most positive and most potent force in evangelism. By using the Sunday School to the extent of its potential, any church can reap a far greater evangelistic harvest than it could do otherwise. And by failing to use its Sunday School appropriately, any church is failing to capitalize on its most 'thrust-worthy' ally in evangelism.*<sup>9</sup>

**Harry Piland** *My strongest conviction, based on nearly forty years experience, is that Sunday School offers unbelievable potential as the visitation organization of the church. In this case, visitation includes both outreach-evangelism, nurture, and ministry. As churches properly utilize the Sunday School in visitation, the potential for doing the Great Commission is unlimited. I truly believe the Sunday School is a powerful force for evangelistic witnessing and Christian nurture.*<sup>10</sup>

## THE PRESENT

In a recent roundtable meeting with a group of education leaders, I (Ken) listened intently as an invited guest and speaker. “What is the future of the Sunday School?” was one of three big topics on the agenda for that meeting. The real “question behind the question” was, “Is Sunday School still viable?”

David, Allan, and I believe it is. But it doesn’t mean that we can rest on the work done in the past. “Sunday School works if you work Sunday School” is one of my favorite sayings. Let’s face it, Sunday School done right is hard work! It requires constant attention. It requires a healthy budget. It takes time. It requires leaders who are always seeking to improve. But Sunday School can work in any setting, if it is worked properly.

### Perspective 5. The greatest evangelistic potential your church has today is Sunday School.

Sunday School has the privilege of introducing people to Christ. But in addition, Sunday School is assigned with the task of teaching the Word and discipling people. It has the responsibility to care, admonish, and exhort the people. Sunday School not only is designed to reach out, but it also developing those who can reach out. This is a powerful one-two punch.

As we continue to think about the present state of Sunday School and its potential for evangelism, listen to the words of some present-day people who have dedicated their lives to the improvement of the Sunday School ministry in our churches.

**Ken Hemphill** *The purpose of the Sunday School and church is to faithfully fulfill the Great Commission. I suggest that the main purpose of the Sunday School is to fulfill the Great Commission.*<sup>11</sup>

**Bill Taylor** *Just prior to His ascension into heaven, Jesus gave His followers one more clear declaration of the mission He had for them. It was a direct reflection of His own purpose for coming to earth...The Great Commission*

*is the driving force for the growth of God’s kingdom and the health of His church...The kingdom ministry of a Great Commission Sunday School is a ministry worthy of investment of time, energy, and resources.*<sup>12</sup>

**Steve Parr** *Sunday School is obviously not the only tool available to the church. However, it is a significant tool that a church can use to corporately engage the Great Commission.*<sup>13</sup>

### Perspective 6. Sunday School strategically meets fifty-two weeks a year.

We’ve said it before, but this is the only church ministry besides the worship service that is open for business year-round. The consistency and dependability can be counted on. People know if they show up to church, they will have an ongoing group in which to meet, study, pray, and be challenged to live out the gospel during the week ahead. No other ministry of the church can make this claim. Sunday School has been given “prime time” on the church calendar for a reason.

### Perspective 7. Evangelism appears to be less important in today’s Sunday School classes.

Evangelistic fervor appears to have waned over the last quarter century—at least in Southern Baptist churches.

<b>Baptism Comparison</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2016</b>
Baptisms per church	10	6.5
Baptisms per members	1 per 26	1 per 51
Baptism per worshiper	1 per 12	1 per 18.5
Baptisms per SS attender	1 per 9.5	1 per 12
Baptism per US population	1 per 661	1 per 1,049



- *It now takes more church members, worship attendees, and Sunday School participants to win one person to Christ in a year than it did in 1990.*
- *As our national population continues to increase and baptisms continue to decrease, spiritual darkness grows.*
- *It is more crucial than ever that we change the evangelistic culture in our classes.*

### Perspective 8. Many classes have no intentional, on-going, outreach strategy.

This only leaves the church with an unintentional outreach strategy! And how does that work? Would a church dare take this approach to worship, stewardship, building projects, etc.? Chaos would reign if a church did not intentionally approach these issues with thought, prayer, planning, and an intentional strategy to execute. Yet, in many cases we have relegated the Great Commission to just winging it! Can we be pleased with this?

### Perspective 9. It's time to have some serious conversations.

Jesus has clearly, undisputedly, and emphatically commanded us to share the gospel. We are to take the gospel message to the people in our culture. Therefore, we must engage people one-on-one. It is the uniqueness of the gospel that gives us our voice in this world. If we are trying to become more like the culture in order to win the culture instead of becoming more like Christ so we can win the culture, the gospel becomes secondary to the method.

### Perspective 10. It is better to be a little too aggressive than a little too passive.

Being aggressive is not synonymous with arrogance, brashness, being insensitive, incompassionate, unkind, etc. In fact, it is incompassionate and unkind to leave them without a witness of salvation. Being aggressive and loving are not mutually exclusive; we can be both at the same time.

## Perspective 11. The American church may be more concerned about souls across the seas than souls across the street.

God planted each of us where we are, and each of our churches where they are. It is appropriate that we would have an evangelistic passion to reach the nations with the gospel, but should we not exhibit the same passion for our neighbors? Jesus calls us to “be witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

We spend most of our lives in our “Jerusalem.” We are “here” more than we are “there.” If we do not get busy “here,” then most of our life will not be lived as a Great Commission disciple because we can only be “there” occasionally.

## Perspective 12. Evangelism is discussed more than practiced.

*There is no subject except prayer, perhaps, which commands the attention of Christian people so much as soul-winning. And yet it is practiced so little! Let us, therefore, consider anew the commanding and pressing importance of soul-winning in the Sunday School.*<sup>14</sup>

This statement was written nearly 100 years ago. Talking about evangelism and failing to do it is nothing new. Talking about the need for evangelism will always attract a crowd and produce a chorus of “amens.” But talk is easy, the hard part is actually doing it. Your Sunday School class can both talk about it and do it!

## THE FUTURE

The days ahead will be full of challenges, but they will also be full of possibilities. New thought-leaders will emerge. Sunday School will adapt to meet the needs of our changing culture. We will rediscover some practices we’ve abandoned in the last decade or two. We may discover new practices we’ve never before attempted. We are thankful to have a voice

as proponents and advocates for Sunday School. We believe the future is bright for the ministry of Sunday School. We believe the Sunday School can be evangelistic once again.

### Perspective 13. Sunday School must adopt a “go” approach; not just a “come” approach.

To reach future generations, Sunday School must reclaim the “go” mentality, going to those not in a group. Most often, a personal invitation serves as the mechanism by which people are grafted into groups. We are mistaken to think the lost, backslidden Christians, and disconnected believers will aggressively seek to find a Bible study group. We must “go” after them.

### Perspective 14. Sunday School must continue to keep groups “open.”

More groups are becoming “closed” groups on Sunday morning. An open group is one that can be visited or joined at any time. In fact, an open group pursues and looks for new people every week. A “closed” group is one that you join at a designated time but is not open for new members until a certain study or time period has been completed.

Sunday School must take the position that if we are the Great Commission ministry of the church and are constantly inviting and contacting prospects, then we must remain “open” fifty-two weeks a year. Exceptions must be strategic. We must anticipate, pray for, and plan for new people to be present each week.

Should a church incorporate closed groups? Is there a place for them? Certainly. However, the church’s main small group strategy should be so outreach-oriented that her doors stay open to reach those not yet reached at all times.

## Perspective 15. Sunday School must continue to be structured to receive, teach, minister, and witness to people of all ages.

One of the great beauties of Sunday School is that it embraces the whole family. Sunday School has a place for every member, every guest, every person from the community regardless of age, race, or background. Sunday School is the place where everyone “fits.”

As we move into the future, group leaders must work with church leaders to identify groups in the community not being reached or who are underserved. They must work together to start new groups so that everyone in the community has a place to belong in Sunday School.

## Perspective 16. Sunday School will grow in its importance as a key way for making disciples.

Sunday School is a holistic, small group strategy. That is, it is the church doing her mission one group at a time. It is how we do church. Making a disciple is more than just one or two components of Christ’s commands. Too often groups just teach the Bible; or just fellowship with believers; or just minister to the needs of others; or just, well, you get the point. With the exception of worship, Sunday School shoulders many aspects of disciple-making.

### *Discipleship Groups*

Discipleship groups (sometimes abbreviated as D-Groups or called by a variety of other names) are going to be the topic of conversation for a long time into the future. I (Ken) teach an adult Bible study group at my church, and one of my goals is to gently prod my group members to relate to one another in an even smaller setting than our 16-member group. I’ve asked the men and women to form D-Groups as a way to continue the discipleship process. D-groups are same-gender groups that meet weekly, or perhaps every other week, for the purpose of praying, studying, and sharing life together at a deeper level than we can in Sunday School. How wonderful would it be if churches used their Sunday School ministry

to develop intentional groups of disciples? The people in the D-Groups would already have a common frame of reference (they're all be members of the same Bible study group), and they could even use their Personal Study Guides as a means to discuss the Scripture more fully.

### Perspective 17. Sunday School must continue to strategically place people in roles of leadership and service.

No other ministry can boast of employing and empowering more of God's people into meaningful roles of ministry! Think of the tens of thousands of faithful servants involved each week in kingdom work. Sunday School engages the spiritual gifts of God's people like no other ministry! Sunday School acknowledges that the Holy Spirit has providentially endowed Jesus' followers with gifts and that those gifts are to be put to use "to do the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12). Sunday School gives you the opportunity to use your giftedness for the kingdom of God. It also gives you the opportunity to help others use their giftedness.

### Perspective 18. The problem of soul-winning will continue to be a problem of the heart.

*A lack of compassion on the part of many churches may account in a large measure for the meager results in winning people to Christ. The compassion of Christians should match the commission of Jesus.<sup>15</sup>*

It has always been about the heart. Education, training, and being an apologist are most beneficial, but if the heart is not in it, soul-winning is absent. When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus responded, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37). Heart always comes first; before soul, before mind, and before strength. If our hearts are right, soul-winning will have its rightful place in our lives.

## Perspective 19. Classes must rediscover the value of Personal Study Guides as evangelism and discipleship tools.

We cannot underestimate the value of a Personal Study Guide when it comes to evangelism. These help guests connect to the group, provide a means for discipleship, and are a tool for inviting any and all people to a Bible study group. We think you should provide one to:

- *Every member*
- *Every guest who attends your group*
- *Every prospect you visit*

Further, we believe you should expect people to read the materials in the PSG

- *Every time they come to the group gathering*
- *Every time they are absent from the group gathering*
- *Any time the group gathering doesn't happen*

The Personal Study Guide is a discipleship tool, not just a group discussion tool. Use it every week. Groups may not meet every week. Group members may not attend every group meeting. But discipleship doesn't take any weeks off! You can always talk to a lost person about what they've been reading. So, providing others with a Personal Study Guide opens the door for you to initiate spiritual conversations (see Practice 17).

## Perspective 20. The Lord is returning soon.

The book of 2 Peter contains some pretty sobering words about evangelism. Peter reminded his readers the earth will soon be destroyed by fire (3:7) and that God's apparent "delay" in returning is not because he is slow to keep His promise, but His return is slow because He desires for people to be saved (3:9).

In Peter's final words in chapter 3, he gave the church some strong encouragement to share Jesus with everyone they can. "Regard the patience of our Lord as an opportunity for salvation," he says (v.15). This simply means that every day God delays sending Jesus back to earth to gather His church, it's another day we can go about sharing the gospel.

## Conclusion

We want to introduce you to Wayne. A friend invited him to attend a new Bible study group. It was the group's first day to meet. The group met that next week at a local restaurant to discuss how they could grow their new class. Since Wayne was enrolled in the class that first day, he attended the lunch meeting as well. It was his class too! That group met a few weeks and eventually initiated a conversation with Wayne about spiritual things. Wayne realized his need for Christ and committed his life to Jesus.

Wayne grew in his understanding of Christ and began to take some responsibilities in the class. He brought others with him to the class and several of them eventually followed Jesus. In time, Wayne agreed to teach when the main teacher was away. The group grew and they decided it was time to start another group. Wayne volunteered to be the teacher of the new group. Both groups continued to reach new people, share the gospel, see more people accept Christ, and disciple each other.

Everything that was just described took place because a few people got serious about reaching people through a Sunday School class. They didn't do anything fancy. They just focused on finding people not in a Bible study group, letting them know there was a place for them, and even made sure there was place for others by starting a second group.

We have to wonder what could happen if just a few people in every church got serious about evangelism through the Sunday School. We don't know that every group that got serious about it would have the same experience as the group described above. We do know that if it doesn't happen, there will be lots of "Waynes" in this world who will never discover the joy of the gospel, who never become an active member of a Sunday School class, and who will never grow into a group leader.

Our challenge to you is to join us in praying about your role in making evangelism an important part of your Sunday School class.



# Endnotes

1 For a more detailed discussion about these three roles, see 3 Roles by David Francis and Ken Braddy ([liferway.com/DavidFrancis](http://liferway.com/DavidFrancis)).

2 Allan Taylor, *Sunday School in HD* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009), pp. 50-2.

3 Win Arn, *The Church Growth Ratio Book* (Pasadena, CA: Church Growth, Inc., 1987).

4 Arthur Flake, *Building a Standard Sunday School* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1922, reprint 1956), p. 99.

5 Ibid. p. 98.

6 P. E. Burroughs, *How To Win To Christ* (Nashville: The Baptist Sunday School Board of The Southern Baptist Convention, 1934), pp. 14-16.

7 J. N. Barnett, *A Church Using Its Sunday School* (Nashville: The Baptist Sunday School Board of The Southern Baptist Convention, 1937), pp. 21-22.

8 A. V. Washburn, *The Sunday School at Work* (Nashville: Convention Press, Nashville, TN, 1967), p. 56.

9 John T. Sisemore, *Church Growth Through the Sunday School* (Nashville: Broadman Press, Nashville, TN, 1983), p. 128.

10 Harry Piland, *Going... One on One, A Comprehensive Guide for Making Personal Visits* (Nashville: Convention Press, Nashville, TN, 1994), p. 25.

11 Ken Hemphill, *Revitalizing the Sunday Morning Dinosaur* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1996), p. 99.

12 Bill Taylor, *The Power to Change Lives: The Complete Guide for Building a Great Commission Sunday School* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1998), p. 10.

13 Steve Parr, *Sunday School that Really Works* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2010), p. 27.

14 Flake, p. 99.

15 Barnette, p. 30.

# Appendix

## More on the Role of “Leader” by the Authors

This book is the third of four in the *3 Roles* series. The first was *3 Roles for Guiding Groups: Teacher, Shepherd, Leader*. In it, Ken and David addressed each role in terms of 10 categories, each beginning with an “R.”

<b>3 Roles for Guiding Groups</b>			
<b>10 Rs</b>	<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Shepherd</b>	<b>Leader</b>
Requirements	Calling	Love	Owning
Responsibilities	Study	Community	Organizing
Relationships	Time	Close	Prioritizing
Recruiting	Apprentice	Ask	Partnering
Resources	Curriculum	Records	Variety
Routines	Preparation	Weekly	Reproduction
Ruts	Predictable	Complacency	Closed
Results	Transformation	Enrollment	Reach
Requests	Prayer	People	Reveal
Rewards	Growth	Respect	Accountable

The other books in the series call on those who guide groups to create three aspects of community.

- *Teacher: Creating Conversational Community*
- *Shepherd: Creating Caring Community*
- *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community*

If only one person was responsible for guiding a group, he or she would need to fulfill all three roles. A better way is to have a leadership team. Allan identified three key leaders in *The Six Core Values of Sunday School*. That book contains detailed job descriptions outlining the responsibilities of each position, as well as additional positions for larger classes.

- *Teachers who will teach and be the leader of the class.*
- *Outreach leaders who will lead the class in reaching the lost and unchurched.*
- *Care group leaders who will care for and shepherd the people in their group.*

In *The Six Core Values of Sunday School*, Allan also identified three tasks of Sunday School that align with these positions and roles:

- *Reach people for Christ and church membership.*
- *Teach people God's Word.*
- *Minister to people's needs.*

Allan also addresses three additional core values: involving, assimilating, and having relationships with people.

In *The 3D Sunday School: A Three Dimensional Strategy to Help Members and Leaders Fulfill the Great Commission*, David identified the three tasks of members that parallel those of the leaders:

- *Invite people to attend and enroll.*
- *Discover the truths of God's Word.*
- *Connect with others in fellowship and ministry.*

David followed up with a little book devoted to each of the three dimensions:

*I-6: A Six-lane Strategy toward an inviting Sunday School* called leaders and members to create a culture of invitation by simultaneously working to

- *Invigorate. Get the place ready for company.*
- *Incorporate. Retail principles you can use at church.*
- *Intercede. Pray for people far from God.*
- *Invest. Make your community a better place to live.*
- *Invite. Ask people to come to church—and to Christ.*
- *Involve. It takes a whole team of people.*

*The Discover Triad: Three Facets of a Dynamic Sunday School Class* called leaders and members to create environments and experiences for discovery learning through three facets:

- *Scripture. God’s Story is the stack pole.*
- *Stories. People’s stories matter.*
- *Shepherding. Community happens at the intersection of God’s Story and our stories.*

*Connect3: the Power of One Sunday School Class* called leaders and members to connect on all three of the possible levels of class engagement: class, community, and commission. Editor Dwayne McCrary created a table to illustrate the distinctions of each level in several categories:

	CLASS	COMMUNITY	COMMISSION
<b>Participants</b>	Members	Ministers	Missionaries
<b>Focus</b>	Me	Us	Them
<b>Biblical Mandate</b>	Great Confession	Great Commandment	Great Commission
<b>“K” Words</b>	<i>Kerygma</i>	<i>Koinonia</i>	<i>Kenosis</i>
<b>Evangelism</b>	Be nice	Be attractive	Be intentional
<b>Conversations</b>	What I learned in my group	What the group did for me	What our group did for others
<b>Prayer requests</b>	General	One another	People far from God

In *The Six Core Values of Sunday School*, Allan set forth a recommended 75-minute schedule for an adult class that balances the three tasks.

<b>Adult Class Schedule and the Three Tasks</b>			
	Reaching	Teaching	Ministering
<b>10 minutes</b>			Fellowship
<b>5 minutes</b>			Announcements
<b>10 minutes</b>	Outreach discussion Testimonies Emphasis		
<b>30 minutes</b>		Bible Study	
<b>20 minutes</b>			Care Group time

Are you seeing the pattern here? However you want to look at effective Sunday School groups, it always comes back to doing three things well. However you want to slice it!

3 Leader Roles...3 Purposes...3 Key Leaders...3 Member Roles			
Roles	Teacher	Shepherd	Leader
Purposes	Teach	Minister	Reach
Community	Conversational	Caring	Commissioned
Key Leaders	Teacher	Care Group Leaders	Outreach Leader
Members Role	Learner Prepared Participant	Pray-er Minister	Inviter Witness

Did we make up these three things? Hardly! They have been expressed in many different ways and validated by research. Here are some examples:

The Big Three of Sunday School Groups				
<i>Transformational Groups</i> (Ed Stetzer & Eric Geiger)		Formation	Connection	Mission
<i>Essentials of Groups Ministry</i> (Michael Kelley)		Disciple making	Community building	Culture shaping
<i>Simple Small Groups</i> (Bill Search)		Changing	Connecting	Cultivating
Allan Taylor		Teach	Minister	Reach
D. Francis	<i>3D Sunday School</i>	Discover	Connect	Invite
	<i>Discover Triad</i>	Scripture	Shepherding	Stories
	<i>3 Roles</i>	Teacher	Shepherd	Leader
	<i>Connect<sup>3</sup></i>	Class	Community	Commission

Whatever you call them, do these three things!  
They are the foundation of the role of leader.

Additional resources by Allan Taylor:

*Sunday School in HD: Sharpening the Focus on What Makes Your Church Healthy* (Nashville: B&H Publications, 2009). Addresses the Role, Purpose, Growth, Leadership, and Passion of the Sunday School.

*Sunday School Done Right: A Leadership Training Strategy for Reaching, Teaching, and Ministering* (Dallas: Sampson Resources, 2007) DVD-driven. 6 sessions:

- *Commission*
- *Conviction*
- *Clarity*
- *Consistency/Certainty*
- *Commitment*
- *Challenge*

Additional resources by David Francis (available free in digital format at [lifeway.com/davidfrancis](http://lifeway.com/davidfrancis) or the iTunes store. Available in Spanish via [lifeway.com/espanol](http://lifeway.com/espanol). Training plans and PowerPoint presentations for each book in English and Spanish. Photocopying permitted (popular for conversion to large print)

*Great Expectations: Planting Seeds for Sunday School Growth* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2009). Three expectations:

- *Expect new people every week.*
- *Expect people to say “yes.”*
- *Expect to plant new classes.*

*Transformational Class: Transformational Church Goes to Sunday School* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2010). A chapter on each of the seven elements found in the Transformational Churches:

- *Missionary Mentality*
- *Relational Intentionality*
- *Vibrant Leadership*
- *Prayerful Dependence*
- *Worship*
- *Community*
- *Mission*

*Missionary Sunday School: One Mission, His Story, Every Person* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2011). Approaches Sunday School from the viewpoint of history and missionary strategy.

- *One Mission: Transformation*
- *His Story: All the Bible for All of Life*
- *Every Person: The Missionary Principle of the People Group*

*Extreme Sunday School Challenge: Engaging Our World Through Groups* (with Bruce Raley) (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2012). Includes specific ideas for possible new groups.

*Countdown: Launching & Leading Transformational Groups* (with Rick Howerton) (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2014). Succinct but comprehensive look at all things “groups.”

- *10 Terms Impacting Conversations about Discipleship through Groups*
- *9 Research-validated Reasons to Disciple People through Groups*
- *8 Big Choices Impacting the Dynamics of Groups*
- *7 Elements of Transformational Churches Applied to Groups*

- *6 Challenges to Conventional Thinking about Groups*
- *5 Stages for Launching New Groups*
- *4 Starting Points for Approaching Group Bible Study*
- *3 Purposes for Prioritizing a Group's Mission*
- *2 Key Words that Will Determine Your Ministry's Destiny*
- *1 Essential Book for Guiding Group Conversations*

*The Five-Step Formula to Sunday School Growth* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2005) Based on the Works of Arthur Flake (Flake's Formula). David's first little book. Below is an updated chart on Flake's formula from the *Countdown* book:

<b>A Slight Twist on a 100 Year-old Formula that Still Works</b>		
<b>Flake's Formula</b>	<b>Francis' Flaky Formula</b>	
<b>Know</b> the possibilities.	<i>Dream</i>	Imagine what could be; where it could be; how it might be.
<b>Enlarge</b> the organization.	<i>Declare</i>	Announce the groups you'll launch before you need them or have the leaders for them.
<b>Enlist</b> and train the leaders.	<i>Develop</i>	Call out and develop leaders who can develop leaders.
<b>Provide</b> space & resources.	<i>Determine</i>	Plan wisely to feed people any place conducive to Biblical community.
<b>GO</b> after the people!	<i>Deploy</i>	Launch new groups that will not wait to be found but will go find people!





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Being a commissioned community is perhaps the most neglected role of Bible study groups.

The purpose of this book is to provide a framework for conversations about outreach and evangelism through Sunday School. David Francis, Allan Taylor, and Ken Braddy look at practices (the hows), principles (the whats behind the hows), and perspectives (the whys that drive the whats and hows) that are foundational for a Bible study group to establish, reestablish, or maintain a focus on outreach and evangelism.

This book is for everyone involved in a Bible study group and is the third of four books in the 3 Roles series. This series of books encourages groups and group leaders to create conversational communities (*Teacher*), create caring communities (*Shepherd*), and create commissioned communities (*Leader*).

Additional helps can be found at [www.LifeWay.com/DavidFrancis](http://www.LifeWay.com/DavidFrancis).

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