

THE 3D SUNDAY SCHOOL

A Three Dimensional Strategy to Help Members and Leaders

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is lead Sunday School members and leaders to clearly understand the three major functions of the Sunday School: invite, discover, and connect and enable them to implement each of these three functions.

These procedures are prepared for the following settings:

1. Training all of the leaders and adult members in a local church in one setting.
2. Training all of the leaders of a local church in one setting.
3. Training all the general leaders (Sunday School Directors, Ministers of Education, Pastors, Outreach Directors, Sunday School Secretaries, etc.) in a multi-church event.

PREPARATION

1. Secure a copy of *The 3D Sunday School* for each anticipated participant.
2. Print one copy of “Why 3 Dimensions?” (item 1) for each anticipated participant for procedure 1.
3. Cut sufficient three-inch pieces of three-stranded rope to have one for each anticipated participant for procedure 1.
4. Prepare team assignments, “The Importance of Balance” (item 2) for procedure 8.
5. Prepare tear sheet with question for procedure 13. (Also on PowerPoint®.)
6. Print one copy of “Is My Class an Open Group?” (item 3) for each anticipated participant for procedure 15.
7. Prepare group assignments “When Do We Have Opportunities to Enroll” (item 4) for procedure 19.
8. Prepare a tear sheet with the picture of a door called for in procedure 22. (Also on PowerPoint®.)
9. Prepare a tear sheet with the words *rejoice* and *weep* called for in procedure 23.
10. Prepare a tear sheet (or marker board) with the acrostic FRAN called for in procedure 24.
11. Prepare a tear sheet with the words called for in procedure 30. (Also on PowerPoint®.)
12. Print one copy of “Discover” (item 5) for each anticipated participant for procedure 32.
13. Prepare the group assignments, “Facilitating Discovery” (item 6) called for in procedure 36.
14. Prepare the two tear sheets (Positive First Impressions and Negative First Impressions) called for in procedure 42.
15. Prepare the placards and rope for procedure 47.

PROCEDURES

Introduction

① As the participants enter the room guide each participant to find the piece of rope in his or her chair and item 1 containing the following instructions: *Why do you think this rope is constructed with three strands? List on this page the advantages of having three strands in this rope.*

② When it is time to start, welcome the participants. Thank them for being present. Share the importance and value of the study they are about to experience. State that they are going to be introduced to the three dimensions of a Sunday School that fulfills the Great Commission. State the study is done from the viewpoint of the member of a Bible study group/class that is focused outward as it seeks to fulfill the Great Commission.

③ Call attention to the three-stranded rope each of the participants found in their chairs as they entered. Ask for responses to the two questions listed on item 1. Encourage responses. Read aloud Ecclesiastes 4:12b: **A cord of three strands is not easily broken.**

④ State that during this session you are going to explore the three strands or dimensions of a balanced Sunday School. State: **Those dimensions are: Invite, Discover, and Connect.**

⑤ Ask participants to turn to page 5 in their books. Review the following content with them regarding Invite, Discover, and Connect.

“Invite, discover, and connect are three dimensions that benefit and involve every member. Members of a 3D Sunday School class view the class as more than a group of friends enjoying Bible study and fellowship. They see the class as a Great Commission team. 3D Sunday School class members covenant together with prayerful and strategic intent to execute all three dimensions of a balanced Sunday School.

- Members enter into a kingdom “conspiracy” to work together to make their class a safe and hospitable environment that motivates members to invite unchurched Friends, Relatives, Associates, and Neighbors (FRANs). In a 3D class, members invite people not merely because the class is responsible for getting people to attend Bible study, but rather because the class is responsible for attending to the lives of those people.

- Members in a 3D class covenant together to create small group experiences in which people discover the great truths of the Bible and the faith stories of believers.
- Members in a 3D class work together to provide people the opportunity to connect through fellowship and ministry.”

Emphasize the importance of each of the three dimensions of Sunday School.

⑥ Ask the following questions encouraging response and discussion after each question: **In general, how important is balance in life? What are things/items that get out of balance? (i.e. tires) How do things get out of balance?**

⑦ Ask: **Can our Sunday Schools get out of balance? What are some ways Sunday Schools get out of balance?** Encourage response.

⑧ Hold up the three strands of rope and ask what happens when any one of the three dimensions of Sunday School becomes most important and the other dimensions are seen as relatively unimportant. Group participants into three teams. Give each team one of the items below (Invite, Discover, Connect) and the questions associated with it. Allow five minutes to prepare to answer the questions.

- **Invite.** What happens if the Sunday School class has a strong focus on reaching new people, but when they arrive the Bible study is not meaningful to them (discover) and they do not experience strong relationships and ministry with others in the class (connect).

- **Discover.** What happens if the Sunday School has placed its total focus on doing a good job of teaching for those who come, but it does not reach out to new people (invite) or build relationships with people they are reaching and seeking to reach nor minister to members and unchurched (connect).

- **Connect.** What happens if fellowship and relationships are the number one issue and the intentional discovery of the Bible truths and how they apply to life take a back set to fellowship and the focus is totally on present members with little or no focus on the unchurched.

⑨ Call on each of the teams from procedure 8 to report briefly.

⑩ Ask the participants if Sunday Schools classes in their church have gotten out of balance. How?

⑪ Read the following quote from page 6:

Invite, discover, and connect are intentionally interrelated—like the three sides of triangle. The key to having a 3D Sunday School is balance. The three dimensions actually should be viewed as three strands of a rope or cord. The third strand always gives strength to the other two. Which of the three strands is most important? Each of them and all of them! The same is true with a 3D Sunday School.

⑫ Point out page 7 in the book and the quotes from *High Expectations* written by Thom Rainer regarding the value of Sunday School in growing churches.

3D Sunday School: Invite

⑬ Display a tear sheet with the following question: *Why do new people come to a church?*

- dynamic worship
- children’s ministry
- student ministry
- personal invitation
- special events
- direct mail

Ask participants to indicate which of the six items was most frequently listed in a survey of people regarding why they came to a church. State that 80 to 90 percent of the people surveyed say they first came to the church they currently attend because someone invited them.

⑭ Quote the statement from page 8: **“There is not a more powerful outreach tool than the personal invitation.”** Ask: **Why in this day of mass media does this statement still hold true?** List responses on a tear sheet or marker board.

⑮ State that classes in a 3D Sunday School must be open groups. Distribute copies of “Is My Class an Open Group?” (item 3). Ask participants to indicate with a yes or no whether their Sunday School class fulfills each of these characteristics.

- We intentionally seek to involve and connect with people who are not currently members.
- We encourage new people to join at any time.
- Our class is ongoing and does not stop for periods of time.
- Visitors can understand the study without having attended prior sessions.
- We celebrate when members leave to serve in other age groups.

⑯ Ask which of the above characteristics their class struggles with the most.

⑰ Read the statement from page 8 in the book: **“Leaders and members alike in a 3D Sunday School class invite any person—indeed, every newcomer—to enroll at any time.”**

⑱ Ask: **Why don’t people enroll in Sunday School?** Be ready to receive a number of answers. Then ask: **What is the number one reason?** Then refer to page 8 and state that the reason most people do not enroll in Sunday School is because we do not invite them to enroll. Ask someone in the group to read the enrollment dialog on page 8 beginning with “Hi, Jim, this is”

⑲ Place the participants in teams of four. Give them the following assignment and five minutes to complete their work.

Tony and Susan moved to town three months ago. They have three children. One child is in the second grade, one in the eighth grade, and one is a senior in high school. Jim works at a local utility as a customer service manager. Susan is an elementary school teacher. Brainstorm all of the opportunities there are for someone to invite them to enroll in Sunday School group. What, if any, of the possibilities do you engage in currently? If Tony, Susan, and their children visit on Sunday morning at

your church what opportunities do you have to invite them on Sunday morning to enroll in Sunday School? What, if any, of the possibilities do you engage in currently?

20 Ask each team to give a very brief report. After each team has reported, reference the section in the book on page 9 and state that we have many opportunities to seek to enroll people in Sunday School, but “the invitation must be intentional.”

21 Write the following on a marker board or tear sheet: *The 50% Rule*. Ask participants to write that phrase in their notes. State that historically there is an inexplicable correlation between enrollment and attendance. Nationally Sunday School attendance averages about 50% of enrollment. If enrollment goes up, attendance goes up. If enrollment goes down, attendance goes down. Do not drop absentees, just keep enrolling new people.

22 Draw a picture of a door on the tear sheet or marker board. State that there are many doors of opportunity to invite people to be a part of Sunday School. It is important to be ready to take advantage of those opportunities when they arise. In order to take advantage of those opportunities, we need to be ready to share our Sunday School testimony. Ask participants to prepare their Sunday School testimony using the suggestions on page 10. After a few minutes, ask for volunteers to share their Sunday School testimonies.

23 Read aloud Romans 12:15: “**Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep.**” Write the words *Rejoice* and *Weep* on a marker board or tear sheet. State that life frontiers provide opportunities to minister to people and to invite them to be a part of Sunday School. Ask people to name opportunities to rejoice with people. List those opportunities under “Rejoice” as they are named (*i.e. weddings, births, new home, anniversary, promotion*). Ask people to name occasions to weep with people. List those occasions under “Weep” as they are named (*i.e. death, disasters, divorce, disease, loss of job*).

24 Write the acrostic FRAN on the marker board or tear sheet. State that FRANs provide opportunities to invite people to Sunday School. Fill in the acrostic with:

Friends
Relatives
Associates
Neighbors

Point out the importance of also inviting worship attenders and children.

25 Read the following two quotes from the book, “...there is nothing more effective than a face-to-face invitation. ...Nothing beats looking into someone’s face as you invite them to your class or witness to them about Christ” (pp. 12-13). Ask for participants to share why they believe this is true.

26 Encourage participants to stay in touch with people. State that it often takes as many as 20 touches of some kind before a person responds to an invitation for the first time. Ask if there is anyone in the group who it took multiple contacts before they attended the first time or before they returned after they dropped out of church or Sunday School.

27 Pull an empty chair to the front of the room. Emphasize the importance of an empty chair in the classroom. Ask what an empty chair can symbolize in a classroom.

28 Encourage participants to have an Invitation (Outreach) Leader in every group. This person should have a passion for leading the class to stay to true to inviting people to Sunday School. He/she will:

- Maintain the class prospect file
- Make outreach assignments
- Lead the class to participate in visitation efforts.

29 Close this section by telling the story on page 15, “Your Invitation May Be the Answer to Someone’s Prayer.”

3D Sunday School: Discover

30 Write the following words on the marker board or tear sheet: *find, search, dig, uncover, explore, look up, identify, locate, observe, determine, propose, note, discern, ascertain, hunt for, detect, indicate, notice, contemplate, distinguish, name, describe*

Ask participants to name what the words have in common. State that each of the words calls for active involvement of a learner just as the word *discover* implies.

31 Read the following quote from page 17 of the book: “**Regardless of how much you encourage members to invite others, they won’t do so if the class environment and group experience are not inviting.**”

Ask for a show of hands from those in the group who agree with the statement. State that during this section of the book they will explore the importance of developing an intentional focus on studying and applying God’s Word in a way that every member discovers truths from God’s Word through personal and group experiences.

32 Distribute copies of “Discover” (item 5). State that a 3D Sunday School leads members to discover how God changes lives. Instruct participants to place a “+” in front of each of the statements they see taking place in their Sunday School class and a “-” in front of statements that are not taking place. Members do each of the following in a 3D Sunday School:

- A member discovers how God is at work in his/her life.
- A member is compelled to discover God’s Word individually and as a group.
- A member is encouraged to discover and read the Bible study materials (learner guide) prior to the Bible study session.
- A member is challenged to discover ways God’s Word applies to his/her life.
- A member discovers people who need ministry, hope, fellowship, prayers, discipleship, and a fresh encounter with the Living God.
- A member discovers ways to engage people in Sunday School.

33 State that in a 3D Sunday School, curriculum materials are designed to help people discover “the whole counsel of God” over a period of years. Ask the participants to turn to the chart “15 Biblical Concepts in LifeWay Curriculum” on page 18. Review the eight concepts for Preschool and up. Then review the additional two concepts for Older Children. Then review the additional five concepts for Students and Adults.

34 State: We have already discussed that a 3D Sunday School should be composed of open groups. How does what a group study affect whether or not it is an open group? Explain that each Bible study experience should be self-contained and each lesson stand on its own.

35 State that the setting for Bible study can enhance or hinder the discovery of God's Word. Ask: What size group did Jesus choose to be the group He taught the most closely? (12) State that the larger a group gets the fewer and fewer people can fully participate, especially in discussion. It may seem like there is a lot of discussion in a large group, but actually relatively a few of the people are actually talking.

36 State that discovery doesn't just happen. Group participants into three teams. Give each of the teams one of the assignments below. Provide every participant with a copy of an adult Bible study lesson from one of the LifeWay adult series leader guides. Allow each team five minutes to complete their work.

Team 1: Liven Up Lectures

Using the adult Bible study provided and the content from page 20 in your book, how could a teacher liven up a lecture in this Bible study? Give several illustrations of how this could be accomplished.

Team 2: Discover through Discussion

Using the adult Bible study provided and the content from page 21 in your book, how could a teacher enhance discussion in this Bible study? Give several illustrations of how this could be accomplished.

Team 3: Ask Discovery Questions

Using the adult Bible study provided and the content from page 22 in your book, develop at least one "open question," one "study question," and one "application question" for this Bible study.

Allow each team an opportunity to report. Emphasize the importance of engaging the learners in discovery during teaching.

37 Ask: What is the value of having each member of the class have a learner guide or member piece? After response, list these values:

- Makes members feel more confident
- Helps guests feel more comfortable
- Communicates the value of preparation before class
- Guests can easily find the Scripture passage
- Content of the learner guide can be used in the session—questions, photos, etc.
- Having everything they need in the learner guide helps the new-comer feel "safe."

38 State that the set-up of a room can either enhance or hinder discovery. Ask how the following either enhance or hinder discovery.

- A cluttered room vs. a neat and clean room.
- A plain room vs. a room with colorful visuals/posters/maps related to the study on a focal wall.
- Chairs in rows vs. chairs in a semicircle with the teacher sitting among the members.

39 Close this section by asking participants to think about their most life-changing teacher and what made that teacher so life-changing. Ask for a few participants to tell about their teacher. Then read the following state-

ment from page 24: "The teacher is the lesson most people will 'read' first. Listen to one young man's description: 'First, I fell in love with my teacher. Then, I fell in love with my teacher's Bible. Then I fell in love with my teacher's Lord.'"

3D Sunday School: Connect

40 Read the following statement from page 26: "People will come to your Bible study group and to church if invited. Many will receive Jesus as their Savior if invited. Unfortunately, a disturbing number of these people will drop out of active involvement if not connected."

Ask: Where would a person get connected prior to and after a decision for Christ? (*A 3D Sunday School*)

State that a 3D Sunday School focuses on relationships and helps members and prospects connect with others in the group.

41 Read aloud Romans 12:13 and 1 Peter 4:9.

"Share with the saints in their needs; pursue hospitality." Romans 12:13 (HCSB)

"Be hospitable to one another without complaining." 1 Peter 4:9 (HCSB)

State that the Bible commands us to practice hospitality.

42 Place a tear sheet on one wall of the conference room that says "Positive First Impressions." On the opposite wall place a tear sheet that says "Negative First Impressions." Group participants into two teams with a person to record their responses. Ask one team to brainstorm actions that can take place on Sunday morning that make a positive first impression and list those actions on the appropriate tear sheet. Ask the other team to brainstorm actions that can take place on Sunday morning that make a negative first impression. Allow each team three minutes to prepare their list. After they have prepared their lists, ask each team to share.

43 Ask participants to turn to pages 26 and 27 and read the section entitled "Connecting Starts with First Impressions." As they read that section, ask them to underline positive actions they could take in their church and Sunday School. Ask individuals to name actions they have underlined.

44 Ask who in the group has a "Welcome Center" where they register all guests. Discuss the value of a welcome center.

45 Ask: How can everyone wearing name tags, members and guests, enhance people making connections?

46 State that in order for the Sunday School to focus on "connecting" there needs to be people throughout the Sunday School who give specific attention to that responsibility. State that the people with that responsibility are the Care/Connect Group Leaders (or Connect Group Leaders). Give these characteristics of Care/Connect Groups and Leaders.

Care/Connect Groups

- 5-7 people.
- Separate groups for men and women.

Care/Connect Leaders

- Contact every assigned member every week.
- Communicate prayer and ministry needs.

④7 Prepare the placards and rope for the following “Connect” visual for the focal wall. Before the session, place the placard reading “Connect Members and Prospects” on the wall with the eight ropes extending from it. Then place each of the other placards on the wall as you interpret the content for each of those areas of connect found on pages 29–34. Key points for each to cover are listed below.

Alternative activity: Assign to individuals or groups each of the eight areas below. Allow groups five minutes to read the assigned information and be prepared to report to the entire group. Give each individual/group the placard for their assigned area. Ask them to place the placard on the wall in the diagram when they report.

a. Ministry (in Preschool, Children, and Student Sunday School)

- Keeping preschool, children’s, and student classrooms adequately staffed should be a priority.
- Develop a culture where members are encouraged to serve.
- Assign in-service members of adult classes to group leaders to stay in touch with them as associate members.
- Involve in-service members in class activities.

b. Prayer

- Have a well-organized care group structure in order to communicate prayer requests and praise reports.
- There are devotional helps like *Open Windows* to assist individuals in praying for missionaries by name.

c. Fellowship

- Fellowship is a spiritual discipline, requires time, and must be planned.
- Encourage groups to set aside specific times for class fellowship activities.
- Encourage fellowship activities by providing proper support through publicity and child care.
- Fellowship often involves food.

d. Absentees

- Group leaders contact every member every week
- Do not drop people unless they die, move beyond a reasonable driving distance, or join another church.
- Regular contacts do not need to be extended conversations, especially for active members, just touch points weekly.

e. Affinity Groups

- You will discover things about people: hobbies, interests, where they grew up, etc.
- Connect people with common interests.
- Common interests may be the basis for care groups.

f. Worship

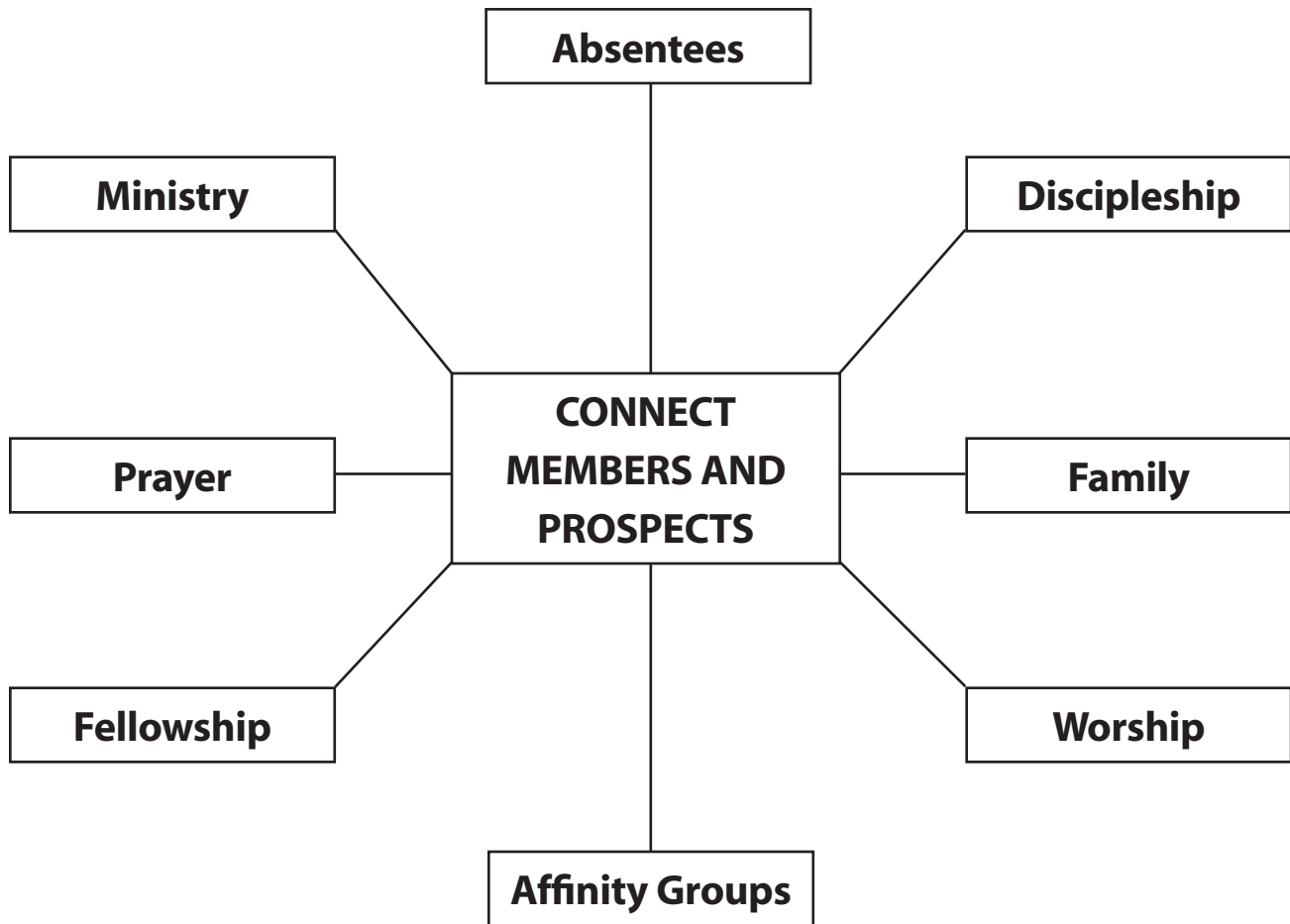
- Class members and leaders can connect newcomers to worship by accompanying them and offering to sit with them in worship.
- Be observant during worship, watching for new people who may be prospective class members. Invite them to your class.
- Encourage class participants to plan and conduct personal worship each day at home.
- Distribute devotional literature to all age groups.

f. Families

- Sunday School is the most family friendly ministry in the church with something for every member of the family.
- In a 3D Sunday School there are no baby-sitters – those who care for babies, ones, and twos teach them.
- Prepare well for preschool, children, and students.
- Young adult parents usually see the preschool and children rooms and meet the leaders of those groups before arrive at their own classroom.
- There must be safety and security procedures for preschool, children, and students.
- Have planned learning experiences appropriate for each age group.
- Provide parents with supportive follow up and help including magazines like *ParentLife* and *Living with Teenagers*.

g. Discipleship

- The Bible is the textbook of the Sunday School.
- Sunday School cannot do the whole job of discipleship.
- Discipleship groups are closed groups focused on a specific subject or topic for a defined period.
- These groups are held at a different time than when Sunday School meets.
- Members enter into some level of covenant and accountability with one another.
- Sunday School and discipleship are different on purpose.
- Small discipleship groups that meet at another time may be an outgrowth of a Sunday School class.



④⑧ Emphasize how Sunday School facilitates connection between people and various parts of the work of the church by asking: **How does the church strengthen its focus on discipling members and leaders? (through the Sunday School)** **How does it promote mission offerings and mobilize members for missions? (through the Sunday School)** Say: **A 3D Sunday School accomplishes foundational evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, worship, and so much more. It invites. It discovers. It connects. Purposefully. Intentionally. Strategically.”**

④⑨ Close the study with prayer that the Sunday School groups represented will genuinely make a difference in the lives of people as they invite, discover, and connect with people and the Word of God.

WHY 3 DIMENSIONS?

1. Why do you think this rope is constructed with three strands?

2. List the advantages of having three strands in this rope.



THE IMPORTANCE OF BALANCE



TEAM 1: INVITE

What happens if a Sunday School class has a strong focus on reaching new people, but when they arrive the Bible study is not meaningful to them (*discover*) and they do not experience strong relationships and ministry with others in the group (*connect*)?

TEAM 2: DISCOVER

What happens if the Sunday School has placed its total focus on doing a good job of teaching for those that come, but it does not reach out to new people (*invite*) or build relationships with people they are reaching and seeking to reach nor minister to members and unchurched (*connect*)?

TEAM 3: CONNECT

What happens if fellowship and relationships are the number one issue and the intentional discovery of the Bible truths and how they apply to life take a back seat to fellowship and the focus is totally on present members with little or no focus on the unchurched?

Is My CLASS AN OPEN GROUP?

Write yes or no in the blank in front of each of the statements below.

- _____ 1. We intentionally seek to involve and connect with people who are not currently members.
- _____ 2. We encourage new people to join at any time.
- _____ 3. Our class is ongoing and does not stop for periods of time.
- _____ 4. Visitors can understand the study without having attended prior sessions.
- _____ 5. We celebrate when members leave to serve in other age groups.

WHEN DO WE HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO ENROLL?

Tony and Susan moved to town three months ago. They have three children. One child is in the second grade, one in the eighth grade, and one is a senior in high school. Jim works at a local utility as a customer service manager. Susan is an elementary school teacher.

Brainstorm all of the opportunities there are for someone to invite them to enroll in a Sunday School group. What, if any, of the possibilities do you engage in currently? If Tony, Susan, and their children visit on Sunday morning at your church, what opportunities do you have to invite them on Sunday morning to enroll in Sunday School? What, if any, of the possibilities do you engage in currently?

DISCOVER

A 3D Sunday School leads members to discover how God changes lives.

Place a “+” in front of each of the statements you see taking place in your Sunday School class and a “-” in front of statements that are not taking place.

- ___ 1. A member discovers how God is at work in his/her life.
- ___ 2. A member is compelled to discover God’s Word individually and as a group.
- ___ 3. A member is encouraged to discover and read the Bible study materials (learner guide) prior to the Bible study session.
- ___ 4. A member is challenged to discover ways God’s Word applies to his/her life.
- ___ 5. A member discovers people who need ministry, hope, fellowship, prayers, discipleship, and a fresh encounter with a Living God.
- ___ 6. A member discovers ways to engage people in Sunday School.

FACILITATING DISCOVERY

Team 1: Liven Up Lectures

Using the adult Bible study provided and the content from page 20 in your book, how could a teacher liven up a lecture in this Bible study? Give several illustrations of how this could be accomplished.

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