

THE 3D SUNDAY SCHOOL

A Three Dimensional Strategy
to Grow Your Student Ministry
Training Plan—Two Hours
by Sherry Spillman, Lead Student Ministry Specialist,
LifeWay Church Resources

PURPOSE

This plan will guide student ministry leaders to understand and implement a simple three dimensional approach (Invite, Discover, and Connect) for fulfilling the Great Commission; aiming to grow ministry efforts to the community and encompassing the sphere of influence that God has entrusted to them.

PLANNING

To begin this training you should create an atmosphere much like you might imagine a New Testament “underground” church would look/feel like. The theme for this two-hour session is the concept of the kingdom of the King of Light and the battle against the kingdom of darkness. As soldiers of the King, in the battle for the souls of men against the evil king or against the kingdom of darkness, Christians must leave the fort (our church building) or underground and play out the battle strategy on the battle field (the world or school scene for students), not in the fort. The fort is used for strategizing and training the troops, a place of refreshing and encouragement. Non-Christians come to the fort in order to check out the kingdom citizens as a result of having seen something in a Christian on the battlefield and desiring to have the same thing—salvation and Jesus Christ living in them.

Room setting

Prepare the following items:

- Arrange chairs in a large circle or in “haphazard” rows of semicircles, two or three rows deep all facing the same way.
- Provide night lights or artificial electric candles strategically placed around a dark/darkened room.
- Secure glow sticks (bracelet size works well) for each conferee.
- The conference leader may want to dress in dark clothes or draped clothes as though seeking anonymity.
- Option: Play quiet background music.
- Secure data projector, screen, computer for Powerpoint® or an easel if using info charts.

Step 1: Our Mission from the King

- Copy the four “MO Posters” (attachment 1) onto 11-by-17-inch paper. Create four stations by placing one poster on each wall, preferably above a night light or near a candle.
- Hand print Matthew 28:19-20 on plain paper. Make copies for each leader to have two. Roll the paper as on a scroll or parchment.
- Purchase round seals in three different colors. These will be placed on the scrolls to be used for dividing the group into three teams.
- Provide enough Post-It® notes for each leader to have 10.

Step 2: The Battlefield Conditions

- Provide a copy of *The 3D Sunday School* (ISBN 1-41-58-2604-8) for each participant.
- Copy “Group Assignments” (attachment 2) and cut assignments apart.
- Provide 15 sentence strips of various colors and three markers.
- Make two copies of “Our Battlefield” (handout 1) for each conferee. Place two copies on each chair. Below are the answers to the fill-in-the-blanks on handout 1.
 - *Student population in U.S. by the year 2010: 31 million.*
 - *Students currently enrolled in SBC Bible study: 1,039,792.*
 - *Students baptized by SBC churches in 2004: 84,040.*
 - *Students baptized by top church: 627 (TX).*
 - *Students baptized by number 10 church: 120 (CA).*(Figures as reported in *Annual Church Profile of SBC churches for 2004*)

Step 3: Battlefield Assignment or Scope of Mission

- Prepare an “info chart” and place on easel at front of room. On a large piece of poster board, print the following statements:
 - *Sunday School is for the student who is not currently in a class or small group.*
 - *The King has given your students contact points with those students. They are a small light of hope in that sphere of darkness, and that is their battleground.*
 - *The church building or “fort” is not where the real battle takes place. It begins on the field and then moves to the place the body fellowships, plans strategy, and worships together.*
 - *Just as an effective officer goes into battle with his troops, so must the effective leader walk on the turf of the battle zone, in other words, wherever the lost hang out.*

Step 4: Battle Strategy and Training of the Troops (Invite)

- Provide two copies of “The Life Cycle of an Effective Sunday School Class” (handout 2) for each participant.

Step 5: Battle Strategy and Training of the Troops (Discover)

- Prepare “Info Chart” and place on easel at front of room. On a large piece of poster board print the following statements:
 - *Spiritual. Holy Spirit led instead of leader led.*
 - *Critical thinking skills for the absorption generation.*
 - *Helps students articulate their faith through assignments, group work, and giving reports of the group’s work.*

- Students “own” the information; they don’t just catalog in their brains the information the leader discovered and “imparted” to them.

- Provide two copies of “Tips for Teaching for Spiritual Transformation” (handout 3) for each leader.
- Provide enough copies of a leader guide from any dated LifeWay curriculum that so each two people have one (Family Bible Series –Older/Younger Youth, *Life FX*, *Life2*, *Life Focus*).

Step 6: Connect

- Provide two copies of “Developing Student Leaders Through Open Groups” (handout 4) for each leader.
- Provide a stack of Post-It® notes for each leader.

Step 7: Closing

- Write the following on a three-by-five-inch card: *The woman swept, the shepherd searched for the one, and the father watched diligently.*
- Choose a CD with a pertinent song for closing.

PROCEDURES

Step 1: Our Mission from the King (10 min.)

Welcome leaders as they arrive by snapping a glow stick bracelet on their wrists and saying in a low voice: **Welcome to the kingdom of Light. Join your fellow believers inside as we study, fellowship, and worship.**

Direct leaders to select a seat, deposit their belongings, and make their way around to all four stations. As they read the student “M.O.” (method of operation or *modus operandi*) at each station, they should reflect on the name of a student in their class/group who fits the “M.O.” Instruct them to place a blank Post-it note on the poster for each student in their group who operates with that same “M.O.” As additional leaders arrive, enlist one of the early arrivals to hand out the glow stick bracelets and explain the activity as you continue to welcome new arrivals.

After about five minutes, instruct participants to be seated. Welcome them as fellow believers and citizens of the kingdom of Light. Explain that the reason the meeting has been called is to work out an intentional strategy for the body to accomplish the mission of their King—the King of the kingdom of Light. You can elaborate on the theme as much as you want depending on how much explanation you think is needed.

Say: **Tonight, as officers in the battle, we are going to look at the mission ahead of us, the circumstances surrounding our battlegrounds, and explore a three-prong strategy for accomplishing our mission for the King and preparing our own troops to fight for the souls of men. It is our King’s desire that His kingdom be increased. Our battle orders are found on these scrolls.**

Distribute the scrolls you prepared. Ask a volunteer to read the verses from the scroll. Point out that they have been given two scrolls; one for themselves and another for a fellow worker who is not in attendance, or a potential worker whom they should begin to prepare for the mission ahead.

Step 2: The Battlefield Conditions (25 min.)

Say: **It is always helpful to know the conditions of the battlefield. Let’s first see what we have going in our favor.**

Provide copies of *The 3D Sunday School* book. Instruct leaders to identify the color of the seal on their scroll and form a group with others who have the same color seal. Distribute assignments (attachment 2), a marker, and five blank sentence strips to each team, and inform them that they have 10 minutes to complete their assignment. Allow groups to share as you tape the strips on the focal wall.

Say: **Now we are going to take a look at how we are doing currently in the battle.** Draw attention to “Our Battlefield” (handout 1). Review the ACP stats from SBC student ministry (answers in “Planning”). Comment that for the last five years student baptisms have been declining by as much as 11 percent each year. Allow leaders time for reflection and response.

Step 3: Battlefield Assignment or Scope of Mission (10 min.)

Call attention to the bottom of “Our Battlefield” (handout 1). Say: **We’re going to look at the scope of our mission or size of the battlefield God has given to each of our classes (or our church). Record on the handout your numbers from the following calculations.**

Listen closely and follow these directions:

1. Record the number of middle schools or junior high schools represented in your class (or church). Below that number write the average enrollment in each school. Multiply the two numbers. (Example: 3 middle schools with average enrollment of 400 each would equal 1200 total students)
2. Record the number of high schools represented in your class (or church). Below that number write the average enrollment in each school. Multiply the two numbers. (Example: 3 high schools, with average enrollment of 400 each would equal 1200 total students)
3. Total the numbers from 1 and 2.

Say: **That number is the scope of your mission. The members already in your class are not just the battlefield! The King has given your body of believers this sphere of influence. We must help the troops understand this and give them assurance that we have the same understanding!**

Refer to the info chart on which you have written the following statements and help leaders understand that:

- *Sunday School is for the student who is not in a class or small group currently.*
- *The King has given your students contact points with those students. They are a small light of hope in that sphere of darkness—and that is their battleground.*
- *The church building or “fort” is not where the real battle takes place. It begins on the field and then moves to the place the body fellowships, plans strategy, and worships together.*
- *Just as an effective officer goes into battle with his troops, so must the effective leader walk on the turf of the battle zone, in other words, wherever the lost hang out.*

(This exercise is especially enlightening for the community church that “has no lost students” or makes the statement “everybody in town is saved.”)

BATTLE STRATEGY AND TRAINING OF THE TROOPS

Step 4: Invite (15 min.)

Say: **As officers of the mission to reach, teach, and minister, we must train our troops to invite, discover, and connect for the sake of the King’s mission. Invite, Discover, and Connect is an effective three dimensional strategy for making sure your kingdom body is a balanced Great Commission group. We must help students know and always keep before them the orders from the King. Let’s discover some basic training tips that we need to instill in the troops for whom we have been given responsibility.**

Examine these tips using the following activities:

Tip 1. Say: **Check out the last paragraph of page 28 of *The 3D Sunday School* book. How many students should be on your roll in order for you to effectively train them to be Great Commission students for the King? (answer: 7)**

Ask: **What is the challenge in making this happen? (You may need to create some new “battalions” in order to penetrate your sphere of influence. You may also need to train another leader to take care of the new battalion.)**

Tip 2. Ask: **Do you know the names of three lost friends of each class member in your charge?**

Challenge: **Next Sunday, invite two of your stronger students to give you the names of three friends they don’t want to die and go to heaven without.** Inform the student that you will pray in general for their friend for a couple of months. In two months, ask the student how you should pray for their friend specifically. In two more months, inform the student to ask their friend how you can pray for them! The student at school will be amazed that someone whom they do not know has been praying for them for four months! That will build an instant bond that will be highly effective when you ask your student to take you to meet the lost friend at the school ball game or the mall!”

Tip 3. Say: **Direct your attention to “The Life Cycle of an Effective Sunday School Class” (handout 2).** Instruct the leaders to remain in the same groups formed earlier to unscramble the strategy points found on the handout. When teams have finished unscrambling, they must then write the order in which the different life cycles occur on the large sheet of paper you have given them.

When all teams have finished, call for them to share their answers. Review the life cycle.

1. Birth of a class (this could be when an existing class grows large enough to become two classes or at the beginning of the church year when classes are begun).

2. Bonding of the class through study, ministry, and fellowship.
3. Growth of the class through evangelism, study, and ministry.
4. Reproduction: a new class is born out of existing class. In other words, two classes emerge out of one.

Remind leaders that all class members should be fully aware of these stages and an excitement should build in the class about birthing a new class so that all students can be taken care of and trained to do the mission of the King. A new class means more room to invite other students to be part of the kingdom and trained as a disciple to be a vital part of the mission. A new class grows more quickly than an older, established class. The officer you are training (*make sure you have mentioned the reason they are receiving two copies of handouts, step 1*) means that the new class will have a leader to minister to them and train them for the mission.

You may want to share this story and personal testimony:

After teaching a seminary class in 2004, I was painfully reminded that a generation of students have grown up not understanding true Sunday School. During class we had been discussing and analyzing an open group strategy for Sunday School where Sunday School is the evangelistic arm of the church. We had worked through the life cycle, explored the fact that classes exist for the student not in them, and talked about the bottom line and main focus being to grow so that more people could be reached and disciplined for the entire process to begin again. As I left class, a young student approached me. He shared with me that as a young minister embarking upon his first student ministry position he was of the understanding from his own home church experience that Sunday School “did not work.” He went on to say, “but what you shared in class today would work! I now realize that I grew up in a dysfunctional Sunday School!”

Help leaders see that all Sunday School leaders are at a pivotal place in time for God’s kingdom. As kingdom leaders we must help students see and experience the class carrying out the mission!

Step 5: Discover (20 min.)

Say: **As kingdom members share the study of God’s Word during Sunday School and discover His heart and mission, they are trained in knowledge. As they act on God’s plan, they grow in character and together experience victory in the battle for men’s souls. An effective curriculum will be an invaluable tool to guide leaders to facilitate an encounter with God through His Word during Sunday School and the days beyond. Let’s look at some tips for the “Discover” portion of the strategy.**

Distribute copies of LifeWay leader guides. As you review the following points, guide leaders to explore and find the sections that correspond with the points:

A. Using a curriculum with built-in Bible study helps, and/or reflective questions for the leader about Bible content and the upcoming study is crucial to the mission. The personal preparation helps should be used to measure the leaders own life in light of the Bible truth for the week.

As you encounter God, it will be easier to lead students to encounter Him.

Say: **In Josh McDowell's book, *Beyond Belief to Convictions*, he shares that his research uncovered that 67 percent of our church kids think that adults at church are hypocrites. If students of this generation are to encounter Christ during Bible study, our lives must be authentic and we must be ready to lead an encounter from the outflow of our own hearts and study.**

B. Using a curriculum that includes guided discovery/activity-based teaching has many benefits:

- ***Spiritual: Holy Spirit led instead of leader led.***

Say: **A kingdom leader knows that he is an alien and stranger (1 Pet. 2:11) on this earth and the battle is in a spiritual realm he cannot even see with his eyes. Therefore, he sees things from a spiritual outlook and kingdom perspective. He knows that if the Spirit does not reveal Himself during Bible study, then no true transformation will have taken place only an intellectual exchange of facts about God.**

Instruct leaders to look up the following verses in their Bibles and discover what the Bible says about the Spirit's role in Bible study. Write their answers on the board or on a large sheet of paper on the focal wall.

- John 16:13: the Spirit guides us into all truth.
- John 16:8: the Spirit is the One who convicts of sin and guilt.
- Acts 1:4-5. Jesus instructed disciples not to leave Jerusalem without the Spirit. Are we guilty of leaving home for Bible study before we have been filled with the Spirit?

Example Illustration: In conferences dealing with Bible study, I ask folks, "When was the last time you expected God to show up in Bible study?" That seems to be a novel thing to some lay workers who may be attending training. Think of your own illustrations from a spiritual slant to get this point across. Review the benefits of Activity Based/Guided Discovery teaching using the info card or Powerpoint presentation.

- ***Critical thinking skills for the absorption generation.***
- ***Helps students articulate their faith through assignments, group work, and giving reports of the group's work.***
- ***Students "own" the information; they don't just catalog in their brains the information the leader discovered and "imparted" to them.***

C. Using varied teaching methods to guide student to discover truth helps students who have multiple learning intelligences or ways in which they learn best.

Say: **Think with me through the various ways you have discovered information tonight.** Guide leaders to name the different methods you have used so far. Make sure they connect with the fact that you have lectured, but you have also guided them to discover some things that you could have just told them. Write the methods on the focal wall as they call them out. *(Fill in the blanks, scrambles, math problems or logic, discussion, lecture, independent reading and searching, group work on sentence strips, etc.)*

Reexamine the list asking leaders to raise their hands when you voice their favorite method. Help leaders see that when we teach students using just one method, some of the group may create discipline problems or be totally clued out and not participate.

D. Searching Scripture. The meat of the lesson **MUST** be Scripture (today's student must see the truth in the Living Word). Quote Hebrews 4:12: "The Bible is sharper than a double edged sword, piercing the heart and able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart." Make sure leaders realize that they are not teaching facts from a history book, but are facilitating an encounter with God through search and discovery of His Word.

Distribute copies of "Tips for Making for Spiritual Transformation a Reality in Sunday School" (handout 3). Review any of the items that you may not have touched on in the discussion above.

At this time take a few moments to acknowledge the presence of God in the room. Lead trainers to intentionally explore the fact that God is in the room with them.

Step 6: Connect (20 min.)

Say: **Part of character building in students comes when they connect to the Sunday School class or small group and the group reaches and ministers together.** Share that George Gallup has discovered four questions that must be answered for the kingdom Sunday School member in order for him to truly connect and have an "M.O." that is pleasing to the King."

Distribute to each group a stack of blank Post-it® note pads. Ask each group member to take a few. Then assign each group one of the following questions: Instruct group members to work individually and write one response per note that answers the question for the new (or even established) member of the class. Critique responses as you place Post-it notes on focal wall next to questions.

Group 1. What's in this for me?

Group 2. What do I need to do to be a real member of this class?

Group 3. Do I really belong? *(really belonging is characterized when the member has a real friend in the class)*

Review this last question with the entire group: **What do I need to do to grow?** Help them see that members must be led to participate in the Discipleship strategy of the church. Sunday School class leaders are the ideal people to help assimilate kingdom members into deeper training.

Say: **Another thing that helps students connect with the mission is to give them ownership of their own Sunday School class.** Distribute copies of "Developing Leaders Through Open Groups" (handout 4), and instruct that it is reading material for when they get home!

Step 7: Closing (10 min.)

Ask: **What is your main motive or mission in Sunday School? Why are you doing what you do with students? Your troops will see and respond to this main motive.**

Point out that we can take a cue from three lives that Jesus spoke of in Luke 15. Read the phrases from the three-by-five-inch card you have prepared,

then ask: **Why did these people do what they did? Why did one sweep, one look for the one out of ninety-nine, and why did the father look diligently?** Allow time for responses, then say: **Because they all loved what they were looking for. That is also the heart of our King!**

Invite leaders to pick up their scrolls. Focus in prayer to the King. Challenge them to ask the King to bring to their minds the name of one fellow kingdom citizen they will commit to seek out to mentor and train as an officer (leader) for battle—in order to get the mission under way! Ask them to write that name on the scroll and set a date to share the additional hand-outs that they have received with that person.

Option: Many may not have the name of a person at this point. You could suggest that they write a pledge to seek out a person to mentor and then sign and date their pledge.)



**I have been raised “in
the kingdom.” Although
I can tell you what the
mission is, I am not
carrying out the
mission.**



**I have just become a
citizen of the kingdom
of Light. I have many friends
who are members of the
kingdom of darkness. I want
someone to show me how to
complete the mission of my
King.**



I love the King. I have many skills and gifts to successfully complete the mission, but no one is helping me plan an effective strategy to do battle.



**I am hurting. I do not
have much hope left in the
people or places of this
world. I hear you say you
belong to “another world”
and that you have hope.
Can I be a member of that
world also?**

Group 3.

CHECK OUT

Page 16 of *The 3D Sunday School* book.

After reading the information about the unchurched, make four or five sentence strips highlighting the most important information gleaned by your group.

Group 2.

CHECK OUT

Page 7 of *The 3D Sunday School* book.

After reading the information about the effectiveness of Sunday School in today's culture, make four or five sentence strips highlighting the most important information gleaned by your group.

Group 1.

CHECK OUT

Page 36 of *The 3D Sunday School* book.

After reading the information about the unchurched, make four sentence strips highlighting the most important information gleaned by your group.

OUR BATTLEFIELD

Conditions in the United States of America

Student _____ in the U.S. by the year _____: _____

Students currently _____ in _____ Bible study or Sunday School: _____

Students _____ by SBC churches in 2004: _____

Students baptized by the church leading in baptisms in 2004. _____

Students baptized by the number 10 church in 2004. _____

(Figures as reported in Annual Church Profile of SBC churches for the year 2004.)

The Sphere of Influence That God Has Entrusted to Our Body

The Who:

Middle Schools represented in our group _____

Average enrollment for our Middle Schools x _____

Total _____

High Schools represented in our group _____

Average enrollment for our High Schools x _____

Total _____

* Middle School Total + High School Total = _____

THE LIFE CYCLE

of an Effective Sunday School Class

Unscramble the following words describing the four-stage life cycle of a Sunday School class. When you have completed the scramble, place the four words in the order in which you think they take place in the life cycle. First team finished is the winner!

G N O N I B D

I T R H B

P O E D C T N R U I R O

R W H T O G

1.

2.

3.

4.

Tips for Making Spiritual Transformation a Reality Through Bible Study

✱ Acknowledge that the Holy Spirit, who teaches adults and leads them into all truth, is the same Holy Spirit that teaches and ministers to the students we work with. Watch to see what He wants to teach students in any given weekly session.

✱ Make sure the meat of the session is actually searching Scripture and examining God's Word, and is not just time spent discussing students' and leaders' opinions or beliefs. It is within Scripture that students will find absolute truth.

✱ Don't let students answer a Bible question unless they tell you the Scripture where the truth is found. In other words, make a reference necessary along with the student's answer. "Show me where in the Scriptures we are studying where you found that truth or answer." Students must see that we get the truth from God's Word, not our own opinions or thoughts.

✱ Be careful not to answer your own questions. Allow students time to think when you pose a question. Let students know that the quietness that follows your question is OK. (That will help settle your own uneasiness when your question is greeted by that "silent sound"!)

When we answer our own questions, we teach students that they do not have to respond and that their answers probably are not important anyway.

✱ Use activities that lead students to discover what we, their leaders, already know or have learned during our personal study and preparation. When we lead them to discover truths out of God's Word for themselves instead of telling them what we know, we allow opportunity for the Spirit to do His work. As we pair students up or group them into teams of two or three to complete an activity, the Holy Spirit makes the biblical truth living and relevant to each of their individual lives. He is freed up to do this when students are allowed to take the dialogue about the assignment and God's Word and steer it where they need it to go, contingent upon what is going on in their lives. Small group assignments also give students "permission" to lead out and participate.

✱ Let students translate information into their own language.

✱ Watch for those times when the Holy Spirit makes Himself known within

the session. Those times very frequently take place as students share the results of their group work or report on their findings in the Word. Be ready to help students make connections with God during those times.

Jesus gave us this promise, "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth, whom the world is unable to receive because it doesn't see Him or know Him. But you do know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you." John 14:16-17

✱ Prepare your heart for worship to take place during the Bible study session. When we think of worship, we traditionally define it by the hour set aside and identified by the components we are used to experiencing corporately (i.e. choruses, drama, presentations of solos and preaching.) Real worship takes place any time we come face-to-face with God and leave His presence changed. So actually, worship should take place in our Bible studies. If we truly believe that God's Word is living and active and is a conversation from Him to us, then we must also realize that He is about to talk to us while in Bible study.

✱ Worship with your students when they lead you into worship. Affirm them for doing so. Sometimes when students share from their assignments and small group work, they will say things that are totally profound. When God grabs your heart as that happens, be transparent and let your students know that you have just had a personal connection with God.

✱ Real worship takes place as we adjust our lives to God because we acknowledge His worthiness. Set the stage for students to have a worship experience with God as they are given the opportunity to measure their own lives up against the biblical truth or standard of God they have discovered in Bible study. Lead them in an activity that causes them to do a face-to-face with God and in some manner answer these questions: In light of the truth we have just discovered, what does God have to say to me personally about the truth?, or How do I measure up to the truth of God?

When students take the time to examine their lives, compare themselves to a Holy God, realize that they fall short, and make a commitment to surrender to Him and His truth, then true worship takes place.

by Sherry Spillman

Developing Leaders Through *Open Groups*

Sherry Spillman

A leader who walks alongside and has a heart to disciple youth can raise the bar of responsibility within an open youth Bible study group.

WHEN YOU STEP ONTO MOST SCHOOL CAMPUSES around the country and inquire about specific school clubs, you will find (if you ask the appropriate questions) that students are giving leadership to the clubs to which they belong. School-teachers and other adult workers on campuses across America are relating to clubs as guides, sponsors, and supporters—acknowledging that “ownership” belongs to students in the clubs.

At the same time, if you were to step into many church buildings on Sunday morning, you would find groups of students meeting. If you were to strategically ask questions, you probably would find that ownership of the open group is placed with the adults who assume the role of Bible study leaders.

Few students are likely to tell you that they feel they have ownership of their own open groups. One effective way to build servant leadership among students is to allow them to own their Bible study group and lead them to do so.

By definition, an open group is “characterized by ready accessibility for a particular purpose; not shut or locked; having no enclosing or confining barrier; available to follow or make use of.” In the context of Youth Sunday School, ‘open’ means both believing teens and unbelieving teens are invited to participate in a Bible study class, study group, cell group, or event that has an evangelistic purpose—every time the group meets.”¹ Students will more readily invite their lost friends to a group that they “own.” Also, for a group to be open in the most complete sense of the definition, students must be committed to the purposes and goals of the group.

When adult leaders do not take advantage of students’ abilities or allow them to exercise their gifts, they do both themselves and teenagers a huge disservice. In effect, leaders hold back students in their Christian growth and maturity.

Ephesians 4:11-14 specifically defines places of service within the church body and makes a strong case that service results

in the maturity of Christians. Leaders must disciple members of the group by allowing them to begin to practice “doing church.” Then students will grow to become fully functional church members as young adults.

As you think about giving students more ownership of their youth Bible study group, realize that they can help Bible study leaders in several of the foundational strategies for growth of the group. Here are areas in which students potentially could assume some responsibility.

Areas in Which Students Can Assume Leadership Roles

Prayer

Students could—

- Take requests during class and be responsible for emailing the prayer list to members. Keep requests in a journal, adding answers to prayers and updates as they become available.
- Be responsible for setting up a prayer chain and for initiating the actions of the chain at appropriate times.

Greeters

Students can—

- Make sure that every member is welcomed and acknowledged on Sunday morning.
- Be responsible for introducing potential group members to all youth and for seeing that guests fill out appropriate information forms.

Assimilation

Teenagers are able to—

- See that new members receive calendars and activity information concerning church-sponsored student activities and discipleship classes.
- Sit with new members during worship or enlist other youth to sit with the new members.

Taken from *The Sunday School Leader* magazine, June 2002. Used with permission.

- Offer to give new members a ride to the next student event sponsored by the church.

Fellowship

Teens can—

- Be responsible for heading a team of members who plan, organize, and carry out fellowship experiences for the group. *TIP:* For older students who have full schedules, fellowship time easily could take place during a ministry project instead of being an additional event or date on the calendar.

Ministry

Youth can—

- Be responsible for assessing needs within the group and for organizing a group effort to make use of opportunities to meet those needs.
- Be on watch for ministry opportunities to prospective members, some of whom may be on the group's prayer list and entered in the prayer journal.
- Organize students to meet a need within other age groups in the church body; for example, to engage in a project targeted toward senior adults.
- Organize members to engage in ministry efforts within the community.

Teaching

Teens are able to—

- Take responsibility, as guided by the Bible study leader, for leading a step from the *Encounter* section of the leader's guide.
- Act as a leader during small-group Bible study assignments.

Steps for Increasing Ownership of Open Youth Bible Study Groups

Consider these ways to set up more student leadership in the open group.

Introduce the idea to the class. This could be done briefly at the end of a Bible study session or at a special meeting at a location other than the church. Share the scriptural bases and your dreams for student leadership within the open group.

Share possible positions of leadership. Ask for input by students. They may have some sound ideas about positions or roles that you have not considered.

At the same time, they may not see a need for some of the responsibilities you suggest. Be open to their discernment of needs for service and leadership.

Take a few weeks for prayer by members and other leaders. Let this be a time to determine whether God may be asking students to be involved in new leadership roles.

As a group, determine which positions the class will put into place.

Set a specific time to “flesh out” each position's job responsibility. Students should be allowed to collaborate in writing job descriptions and determining what responsibilities will “look

like” for the positions being created.

After allowing students time to pray, ask for a commitment to some leadership role. For those who make commitments, enlist for at least a three-month term.

Commission new leaders. Use the prayer time or some other special part of an open-group session.

Consider offering organized discipleship classes for students who have committed to leadership roles. *Jesus on Leadership: Becoming a Student Leader, Student Edition* by Gene Wilkes²; *For Such a Time as This: Being a Millennial Leader* by Jeffrey Meyers²; or *The Student God Uses: Transformed for His Purpose* by Henry and Tom Blackaby² are excellent resources.

Both Adult and Student Leaders Will Benefit

Twenty-first-century students can and should be allowed to grow through the experience of leading. Given the right guidance, they can do so responsibly.

Be aware that at times, though, students may fail to live up to a leader's expectation. Leaders would do well to remind themselves that those in their care are practicing adult responsibilities. They have not yet arrived but, with the guidance of a patient, godly Bible study leader, students will have a chance to move from practicing adulthood to living as a responsible adult. Those who walk alongside youth and have a heart to disciple them can, with assurance, raise the bar of responsibility within the open youth Bible study group.

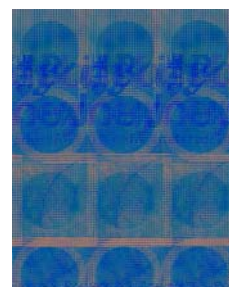
Leaders who determine to give ownership of the group to students can expect to receive added benefits. As a result of actively developing leaders and delegating responsibility to students, one day the adult leader will realize that there is more time to spend one-on-one with group members, more time to spend one-on-one with God—and less time taken to do ministry that God has empowered *students* to do for Him.

For additional ideas on building leaders, finding places of ministry, and identifying spiritual gifts in students, see *BodyLife Journey for Students*,² by John S. Powers and Phillip Herring. ■

¹Bill Craig, *Beyond the Walls* (Nashville:LifeWay Press, 2000), 5.

The new Launch resource is *Beyond the Walls: Multiply Your Ministry Sunday School Annual Planner and CD-ROM*, available from LifeWay Christian Stores or by contacting LifeWay Church Resources Customer Service toll free 1-800-458-2772.

²Available from LifeWay Christian Stores or by contacting LifeWay Church Resources Customer Service toll free 1-800-458-2772.



Sherry Spillman is Lead Student Ministry Specialist, LifeWay Church Resources (a division of LifeWay Christian Resources), Nashville, Tennessee and a member of First Baptist Church, Dickson, Tennessee.