**3 Roles for Guiding Groups**

Conference Plan for Preschool and Children’s Leaders

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**PURPOSE:**

To provide a two-hour teaching experience for Sunday School leaders working with preschool and children, for the purpose of identifying and implementing a strategy for embracing and putting into practice the 3 roles necessary for guiding a group.

**How to use this plan**

* For the local church: Use to train Preschool and Children’s Sunday School leaders during a local church training or kick-off event.
* For regional and state training: Use to train Preschool and Children’s Sunday School leaders in state or associational training events.

**PREPARE**:

**Provide the following resources for use throughout the training**:

* Step 1:
  + Nametag for each participant
  + One chenille stem for each participant
* Step 2:
  + Preschool and Children’s Handout 1: 3 Roles for Guiding Groups
  + Preschool and Children’s Handout 2: Tip Sheet
* Step 3:
  + Two plastic plates, two dry erase markers, two small pom-poms, hot glue gun
  + Samples of LifeWay Children’s Sunday School resources
  + Levels of Biblical Learning Stickers: Bibles (one sticker for each participant)
* Step 4:
  + 50 cotton balls, two plastic bowls, two large spoons
  + 20 glue dots or 20 pieces of small clear tape
  + Sticky Sheep (Item 1)
  + Sticky Person (Item 2)
* Step 5:
  + Speech Bubble Statements (Item 3)
  + Markers
* Step 6:
  + No resources needed

**Download the following materials**:

* Provide one copy of *3 Roles for Guiding Groups* by David Francis for each participant. The book is available as a free download or you can order print copies for $1.50 each at www.lifeway.com/davidfrancis. The book can also be purchased at the Apple iStore.

**Prepare the following resources for use throughout the training**:

* Step 1:
  + Arrange chairs in a semi circle.
  + Place a nametag and chenille stem in each chair.
* Step 2:
  + Reproduce both handouts.
* Step 3:
  + Use the hot glue gun to glue a pom-pom on the top of each dry erase marker lid. When the lid is placed on the bottom of the pen it can be used as an eraser for the plastic plate.
  + Display samples of LifeWay Children’s Sunday School resources on a focal table.
* Step 4:
  + Attach the glue dots or rolled pieces of small clear tape on the 10 circles on the Sticky Sheep (Item 1) and the 10 circles on the Sticky Person (Item 2).
* Step 5:
  + Speech Bubble Statements (Item 3)
* Step 6:
  + No preparation needed.

**PRESENT**:

**1. WELCOME**

Greet conferees as they arrive. Ask each person to make a nametag and find a seat. Guide conferees to stand and play a simple game of “Simon Says.” Give commands such as: *Simon Says touch your ears, Simon Says turn around, Clap your hands, Simon Says flap your arms like a chicken, Simon Says find a new friend and introduce yourself, Scratch your nose, Simon Says pat your head, Touch your knees.*

Ask conferees to sit down if they mess up during the game. Play for several minutes.

Introduce the concept that *words matter.* Share how words are important in the game of Simon Says. Explain how kids even know they are only supposed to do the action if the phrase “Simon Says” is said first.

**2. DEFINITIONS**

Share how conferees will learn about the 3 roles of guiding preschool and children groups. Share that each word in the title matters. Each word has a distinct meaning and purpose.

Discuss the term *Role*. Share the following:

* How somebody acts based on what is expected of him, or a part an actor plays.
* People work to get into a role and work to become a character.
* Although we are not pretending, a *role* implies development, practice, and growth.

Ask conferees to name some *roles* of a Preschool and Children’s teacher? Offer additional answers, such as: *Comforter, Soother, Diaper changer, Bottle feeder, Cracker or goldfish distributor, Potty trainer, Shoe tie-er, Toy cleaner, Marker tester, Play dough picker upper, Pencil sharpener, Referee, Bible verse finder, Paper passer outer, Prayer request recorder*

Ask conferees to distinguish which of the roles is essential and which are nonessential. Share how all of the roles are important, necessary, and essential.

Discuss the term *Guiding.* Share the following:

Ask conferees to share how they guide kids. Offer additional answers, such as: *Guide kids to explore the Bible, Guide a class to connect with one another in fellowship and ministry, Guide a class to be on mission, Guide preschoolers with a rope, Guide kids to keep hands to themselves, Guide kids to learn stories and truths from the Bible, Guide kids to develop friendships, Guide kids to help others.*

Discuss the term *Groups*. Ask conferees to share the definition of a group. Share the following: *Any gathering of people where they explore, discuss, and apply the Bible, Groups are preschool and children’s Sunday school classes*

Share how all the roles we have as Children and Preschool teachers are important. Introduce the concept of the three roles: *Teacher, Shepherd, Leader*. Share how each role is organized into 10 subtitles that each begin with the letter R. The subtitles will help us understand the 3 Roles.

Distribute copies of the Preschool and Children’s Handout 1: 3 Roles for Guiding Groups. Instruct conferees to write down one or two words in each space to help them remember the key points. Guide conferees to think about their own personal roles as Sunday School teachers throughout the conference.

Distribute copies of the Preschool and Children’s Handout 2: Tip Sheet to conferees to refer to throughout the conference.

Lead the conferees in prayer.

**3. ROLE #1: TEACHER**

Ask conferees to hold their chenille stem.

* Ask conferees to guess what the chenille stem represents as you pretend to use it as a pencil.
* Guide conferees to hold their chenille stem as pencils, as well. Share how the pencil represents the first role of *Teacher*.

Ask conferees to think of their favorite school or Sunday School teacher as a child. Encourage them to share one word that describes that teacher.

Define the term *teacher:* Someone who guides discovery. Ask conferees to write in the definition on the 3 Roles for Guiding Groups Handout.

* The job of a teacher is to guide kids to discover.
* The job of a teacher is to help kids discover more about God, Jesus, Bible, church, family, self, community, Holy Spirit, and salvation.
* The job of a teacher is to prepare and lead Bible-learning activities for foundational Bible teaching.

Share that another job of a teacher is to administer Pop Quizzes.

* Explain how the group will participate in a ten question Pop Quiz.
* Ask two volunteers to stand at the front.
* Guide the remaining conferees to jot down their answers on their paper and to keep track of their score.
* Give each volunteer a plastic plate and a dry erase marker.
* Ask the volunteers to listen to the question, write down their answer, and show it to the group.
* If they get the answer correct, they can each choose a new volunteer to take their place at the front. If they get the answer wrong, they will continue and answer the next question.

Guide conferees to listen to the ten questions and write down a few words on the 3 Roles for Guiding Groups Handout that will help them remember how the subtitles connect to the role of *Teacher*.

1. The **requirement** to be a Preschool or Children’s teacher is:

a. Someone who loves the Lord

b. Someone who loves the Word of God

c. Both

ANSWER: c. Both

* Share how teachers need a love of the Lord and His Word.
* Invite a conferee to read Ezra 7:10 aloud to the group “[Ezra] determined in his heart to study the law of the LORD, obey it, and teach its statutes and ordinances in Israel.”
* Share how a requirement of a teacher is someone who will study the Bible, obey the Bible, and desires to teach the Bible.

2. The **responsibility** of a teacher is:

1. Know the characteristics of the kids you teach
2. Know how to write in both Greek and Hebrew
3. Know how to teach kids to read

ANSWER: a. Know the characteristics of the kids you teach

Comment how it is essential to learn about the characteristics, basic development, and challenges of the kids you lead to help kids apply the truths discovered. (Refer to Preschool and Children’s Handout 2: Tip Sheet)

3. The **relationships** you develop as a teacher are:

1. With your family members
2. With the kids in your class and their families
3. With your next door neighbors

ANSWER: b. With the kids and their families

* Comment that the first and most important relationship we have is with God.
* Emphasize that the relationships we build with kids is essential for good teaching.
* Share Bruce Raley’s quote, “Real teaching requires a relationship.”
* Comment that good teachers know their students.

4. The **recruiting** teachers participate in is:

1. Ongoing
2. Once a year
3. Not your job

ANSWER: a. Ongoing

Talk about the recruitment process. (Refer to Preschool and Children’s Handout 2: Tip Sheet.)

5. The top **resources** needed to teach are:

1. Websites and blogs
2. Bible and curriculum
3. Play dough and paint

ANSWER: b. Bible and curriculum

* Discuss how the word curriculum means a “prescribed course.” Using curriculum gives you a plan. There is remarkable comfort found in having a plan.
* Share how curriculum can raise the level of teaching or can lower it. Guide conferees to choose curriculum that is:
* A - Activity Anchored
* B - Bible Based
* C - Child Centered

Offer Curriculum Choices:

Share overview on curriculum line the church has chosen: Bible Studies for Life: Kids; The Gospel Project for Kids; Explore the Bible for Kids using current information from www.lifeway.com

6. A great **routine** for preparation is:

1. Start to look at your lesson on Saturday night
2. Prepare the activities, but don’t worry about the story since you probably already know it anyway.
3. Pray, read the Teacher Bible Study, read the Bible passage, prepare the activities, and pray.

ANSWER: c. Pray, read the Teacher Bible Study, read the Bible passage, prepare the activities, and pray.

* Comment that a great routine for teachers begins early in the week.
* Share how the routine is also infused with prayer.

7. A way to avoid **ruts** in teaching is to:

1. Only teach what makes you comfortable
2. Teach in a variety of ways to a variety of learners
3. Rotate teachers every single week of the year

ANSWER: b. Teach in a variety of ways to a variety of learners

* Challenge teachers to use a variety of learning styles to teach.
  + Share how kids learn in different ways and that we need to teach in different ways including using Visual, Verbal, Musical, Natural, Physical, Reflective, Relational, Logical approaches
* Ask conferees the name the learning styles used during the Pop Quiz:
  + Visual - plates
  + Verbal - listening to questions
  + Physical - writing down answers
  + Logical - thinking of correct answer

8. What are the **results** of being a good teacher to preschoolers and children?

1. Kids learn and understand Biblical foundations
2. Kids learn how to sit still
3. Kids learn how to color inside the lines

ANSWER: a. Kids learn and understand Biblical foundations

* Share how the result for kids is ultimately spiritual transformation. However, teachers in each age group are important because they help kids learn the foundations and understand the truths before transformation takes place.
* Explain how kids need to hear the material, know the material, and then do something with the material.
* Emphasize that immediate results depend on the age group. All teachers are planting seeds for kids. The time and place of salvation is determined by the Holy Spirit.
* Teachers cannot base the results on the number of salvations but rather on whether or not they taught the Bible.

9. What is a prayer **request** teachers can ask the Lord?

1. For kids to love the Word of God and learn and grow in their walk with Christ
2. For themselves to be effective teachers
3. Both

ANSWER: c. Both

* Comment that prayer is the key to successful teaching.
* Teachers can pray for their students and for their own personal growth. Pray, “As I study Your Word this week, would You give me a fresh word?”

10. What are the **rewards** of being a good teacher to kids?

1. You help kids learn about the Lord
2. You personally learn more about the Lord
3. You help kids understand God’s Word
4. You grow in your understanding of the Word
5. You instruct kids on how to apply the Bible to their lives
6. All of the above

ANSWER: f. All of the above

The rewards of teaching are abundant.

Ask conferees what they scored on the Pop Quiz if each question was worth 10 points. Walk around the room and place one sticker on each conferees paper for doing well on the Pop Quiz. Share how the stickers are a visual reminder that understanding the role of a teacher is important.

**4. ROLE #2: SHEPHERD**

Introduce role #2 by bending the chenille stem into a shepherd’s staff. Ask conferees to name the item the chenille stem represents. Ask conferees to bend their chenille stem into a staff. Share how the role of a shepherd is one of the oldest occupations in the Bible.

Direct a conversation on the differences between being a teacher and a shepherd. Offer the distinction that teachers study, plan, and guide their class while shepherds care for the class.

Invite 2 volunteers to the front.

Explain how to play the Shepherd Game:

* Share how each table represents a grassy field, the cotton balls represent sheep, the bowls are the pens, and the volunteers are the shepherds. The job of each shepherd is to gather the sheep and place them safely in the pen.
* Scatter the same number of cotton balls on each table.
* Place a blindfold on each volunteer. Give them a large metal spoon and a plastic bowl.
* Guide the volunteers to scoop up the cotton balls with the spoon and place them in the bowl.
* Explain that the person with the most cotton balls in the bowl at the end of one minute is the winner. (The process is difficult because the cotton balls are so light that many times the volunteers will only scoop up air.)
* At the end of one minute, count the cotton balls in each bowl.
* Comment that although our role as a shepherd may feel as difficult as scooping up cotton balls, the basic principle of shepherding is to love and care for the sheep.

Display the Sticky Sheep (Item 1) and the Sticky Person (Item 2).

Define the term *shepherd:* Someone who takes care (of sheep). Ask conferees to write in the definition on the 3 Roles for Guiding Groups Handout.

Share how you will compare the roles of the Bible-times shepherd and his sheep and the present day teacher and his class as you explain the ten subtitles for the role.

Gather 20 cotton balls from the Shepherd Game. Attach one cotton ball to the Sticky Sheep for each description and one cotton ball to the Sticky Person for the comparison description.

Guide conferees to listen to the ten comparisons and write down a few words on the 3 Roles for Guiding Groups Handout that will help them remember how the subtitles connect to the role of *Shepherd*.

1. Requirements

* Bible-Times: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Sheep)
  + Love for the sheep.
    - Flocks were typically less than twelve sheep.
    - Shepherds were with the sheep constantly. They named the sheep and knew their personalities.
    - The sheep, in return, knew their shepherd’s voice. They knew their name and would respond to it.
  + Constant vigilance.
    - Shepherd remained on guard constantly.
    - Shepherds were always on the lookout for danger.
  + Sense of stewardship.
    - Shepherds were not the owners of the sheep, but were stewards for an owner.
    - Shepherds would risk their lives to save a sheep.
* Present Day: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Person)
  + Love for the class.
    - Class sizes should be appropriate. (Refer to Preschool and Children’s Handout 2: Tip Sheet)
    - Teachers should be constantly interacting with the kids and not off in the corner drinking coffee and chatting with the helpers.
    - Teachers should know each child’s name.
    - Teachers should be familiar with each child’s personality.
  + Constant vigilance
    - Teachers should provide a safe environment for kids to learn.
    - Teachers should be on the lookout for distractions.
  + Sense of stewardship
    - Teachers have the responsibility to use the time with the kids wisely.
    - Teachers should be willing to risk comforts (less preparation, more talking, babysitting) to help kids develop their spiritual lives.

2. Responsibilities

* Bible-Times: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Sheep)
  + Shepherds had a responsibility to care for the flock.
  + Shepherds had a responsibility to the community.
  + Shepherds had a responsibility to each personal sheep.
* Present Day: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Person)
  + Responsibility to the class.
  + Responsibility to the families.
  + Responsibility to know each child’s story and how each family intersects with God’s story.

3. Recruiting

* Bible-Times: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Sheep)
  + Shepherd would find a helper as the flock grew.
* Present Day: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Person)
  + Teachers can enhance their shepherding skills by designating a care group leader for every 5-7 kids.
  + Leaders should contact every member of their group every week.
  + Many times teachers only contact the kids who were absent when in fact, they should contact everyone.

4. Relationships

* Bible-Times: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Sheep)
  + Sheep have great hearing but not good eyesight.
  + Sheep will learn to listen for the voice of their shepherd.
  + Relationship between shepherd and sheep was key.
  + Sheep are led, not driven.
* Present Day: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Person)
  + Each worker/helper/assistant doubles as a care group leader, dividing the class evenly.
  + Teachers can model how to care to the care group leaders.
  + Contact care group leaders each week.
  + Teachers can lead kids to love to learn by establishing good relationships.

5. Resources

* Bible-Times: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Sheep)
  + Shepherds kept track and knew how much food and water was necessary for their size of flock.
* Present Day: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Person)
  + Teachers can keep track of the needs of kids. They can also keep track of who is contacted, when they are contacted, and their prayer requests.

6. Routines

* Bible-Times: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Sheep)
  + Basic routine each day that included food, water, care, and rest.
* Present Day: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Person)
  + Basic routine for each week that includes prayer and care for the kids.
    - Teachers can also show love and care when a child’s routine is dramatically interrupted such as: Terminal illness of child or family member, Birth of sibling, Death of a child or family member, Separation or divorce of parents, Moving away or moving to a new home, Job loss of a parent, Natural disaster, Terrorist attack
  + We can (Refer to Preschool and Children’s Handout 2: Tip Sheet)

7. Ruts

* Bible-Times: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Sheep)
  + If shepherds let their flock graze in the same place all the time then the land would become worn down.
* Present Day: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Person)
  + As teachers our attitudes can become worn down and complacent in our care.
  + Teachers can avoid becoming mechanical in their contact and prayer routines.

8. Results

* Bible-Times: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Sheep)
  + Shepherds determined their results by the number of healthy sheep.
* Present Day: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Person)
  + Examine results of shepherding is harder to quantify:
    - Are kids feeling valued and appreciated?
    - Have deeper relationships formed?
    - Are fewer kids and families falling through the cracks?

9. Requests

* Bible-Times: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Sheep)
  + David sang songs of praise and requests while he watched the sheep.
* Present Day: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Person)
  + Teachers should rely on the Holy Spirit to guide your prayers and to show them how to reflect His work as Comforter and Counselor.
  + We can pray for the Lord to help us remember:
    - People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.
    - We don’t teach the Bible. We teach people the Bible.

10. Rewards

* Bible-Times: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Sheep)
  + Shepherds made money and had the satisfaction of a job well done.
* Present Day: (Place one cotton ball on the Sticky Person)
  + The reward of shepherding is spiritual growth built through relationships.

Conclude that the role of *Shepherd* is not a lost art, but an important part of present day ministry.

**5. ROLE #3: LEADER**

Bend the chenille stem back into a straight line. Form one end into a small round ball.

Ask conferees to guess what you are doing as you pretend to be a drum major:

* Place the chenille stem in your right hand, with the ball end pointing straight up.
* Move the chenille stem up and down in a steady beat.
* Place your left hand on your hip and march in place.

Share how the job of a drum major is to lead the band. Drum majors determine the beat, the pace, and the direction. Explain that preschool and children teachers are also leaders. They determine the rhythm, the pace, and the direction of their class.

Explain that many kid’s ministry teachers may not actually believe they are leaders. Teachers may look to a Director or staff person as their leader. Share how each class needs leadership and the teacher—who is also the shepherd—is also a leader.

Define the term *leader:* A person in charge or in control. Ask conferees to write in the definition on the 3 Roles for Guiding Groups Handout.

Place the conferees into 10 groups. Assign each group a Speech Bubble Statement (Item 3). Ask them to complete the sentence on the speech bubble. After a few minutes, ask each group to read the completed statement on their speech bubble. Provide additional explanation for each statement as needed.

Guide conferees to listen to the ten statements and write down a few words on the 3 Roles for Guiding Groups Handout that will help them remember how the subtitles connect to the role of *Leader*.

Statements:

1. One requirement to lead my class is:

* Accept and embrace the role
* Know the mission - Teach kids in Small-Group and Large-Group Experiences (Refer to Preschool and Children’s Handout 2: Tip Sheet)
* Have a servant mindset
* Demonstrate godly character

2. One of my responsibilities as a kid’s leader is:

* Learn and apply God’s Word
* Invite others to become Christ-followers
* Form authentic relationships
* Engage in service to others

3. One tip for recruiting leaders is to:

* Delegate the work.
* Recruit a team to help
* Share the vision

4. One relationship I can focus on as a leader is:

* God
* Family
* Kids
* The lost
* Apprentice
* Mentor
* Colleagues

5. One resource I need to lead is:

* Bibles
* Commentaries
* Atlas
* Bible dictionaries
* Books on leadership

6. One routine I think is necessary as a leader is:

* To read
* To pray
* To invest in new leaders

7. One rut I want to avoid as a leader is:

* Don’t turn inward
* Always welcome new kids and new families
* Reach those who are members but not attending

8. One result I desire as a leader is:

* Reach
* Release
* Reproduce

9. One request I can pray for as a leader is:

* Pray for your team - current and potential

10. One reward as a leader is:

* Ask God for a fresh vision
* The reward is great for the one who guides a group well as a teaching-shepherd-leader.

Conclude that the role of *Leader* is an essential part of a Preschool and Children’s ministry.

**6. CONCLUSION**

Help conferees fill in their handout as needed. Suggested answers include:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | C:\Users\kmcanally\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\QITPMXUQ\MC900432579[1].pngTeacher | C:\Users\kmcanally\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\FTRAGTU1\MP900384756[1].jpgShepherd | C:\Users\kmcanally\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\T4JX3I8F\MC910217439[1].wmfLeader |
| Requirements | Love God’s Word | Love the sheep | Godly character |
| Responsibilities | Know characteristics | Learn about the families | Organize |
| Relationships | Kids | Kids and families | Other teachers |
| Recruiting | Teachers/Helpers | Care Group Leaders | Build team |
| Resources | Curriculum | Cards and calls | Books and websites |
| Routines | Leader Bible Study | Contact weekly | Learn and pay |
| Ruts | Offer variety | Avoid complacency | Reach all members |
| Results | Foundations | Relationships | Reaching lost |
| Requests (prayer) | Kids to learn | Kids to grow | Kids to reach |
| Rewards | Spiritual growth | Ministry | Fresh vision |

Guide conferees to reflect on the three roles. Ask them to answer the following questions in their mind:

* In which role am I succeeding?
* Which role needs more effort?
* Which role feels natural?
* Which role feels unnatural?
* In which role do I find great joy?
* Which role makes me anxious?

Share how all three roles have spiritual gifts associated with them.

* If God has given a person the spiritual gift of teaching, then teaching will be like second nature.
* However, it is rare to find someone with more than two of the spiritual gifts of teaching, shepherding, and leading.
* Conferees should identify their gifts, recruit others on the team, and depend on the Lord to accomplish the 3 roles.

Ask conferees to think about their specific groups of kids. Share how God believes that all groups matter. Ask conferees to look up Hebrews 3:13. Share the point from Eric Geiger: God has supernaturally designed community to mature His people. Preschool and Children’s leaders help kids and families develop community in their churches.

Encourage conferees to place the chenille stem in Hebrews 3:13 as a reminder to encourage others as they teach, shepherd, and lead kids.

Close the conference with prayer, thanking God for how He continues to teach, shepherd, and lead each one of us.