



Connect³:

The Power of One Connected Class

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Purpose: To provide a two hour teaching experience for student Sunday School leaders and members to identify specific ways to strengthen their Sunday School class.

How to use this plan

- For the local church: 1) Use to train student Sunday School leaders and members during a local church training or kick-off event. 2) Use one 10-20 minute step each week or month during worker's meetings over an extended period of weeks.
- For regional and state training: Use to train student Sunday School leaders and members in state or associational training events.

PREPARATION:

Provide the following resources for use throughout the training:

- Name tags: template is provided in Connect³ Sunday School Launch Kit. For ordering information, visit www.lifeway.com/sskickoff or write LifeWay Church resources Customer Service, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0113, or FAX 1-615-251-5922. Provide one name tag for each participant.

- Markers
- Tape
- Large sheets of paper
- Handout 1: Connections Overview
- Handout 2: Connections Comparison
- Four signs each with a letter: F, R, A, N
- Handout 3: Connecting Through Prayer
- Handout 4: The Target of Praying
- Handout 5: Evaluation



Download the following materials:

- Connect³: The Power of One Connected Class, by David Francis. For ordering information, visit www.lifeway.com/sskickoff or write LifeWay Church resources Customer Service, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234-0113, or FAX 1-615-251-5922. Provide one copy for each participant.
- Powerpoint presentation: Connect³: The Power of One Connected Class -Student.ppt

Prepare a display of the following resources:

- Connect³: The Power of One Connected Class, by David Francis
- Sample of LifeWay Student Sunday School resources, *LifeFocus*: including Leader Packs, Leader Guides, and Learner Guides, *KNOWN*: Leader Guide and Student Book, and *essential connection*

Prepare the room for learning that helps students connect:

- Arrange chairs in a semi-circle facing a focal wall.
- Place name tags and markers near chairs for participants to prepare their own name tag.
- Arrange AV equipment for PowerPoint presentation (screen, extension cord with multiple plug outlets), • Provide CD player and selected disk for background music (OPTIONAL).

Procedures:

1. INTRODUCTION TO CONNECTIONS (10 min.)

As conferees enter, direct them to fill out and wear a name tag with the following information: name and their favorite beverage. [SLIDE 2]

Direct conferees to pair off and discuss one place they like to go to "just hang out and be with people." (Someplace besides home or the church!) [SLIDE 3] Encourage them to consider the following:

1. What first brought you to that place?
2. What keeps you coming back to that place?

Explain to them the concept behind Starbucks. Starbucks does not want simply to sell you a cup of coffee; they want to sell you an experience. When you first walk into a Starbucks restaurant, you are coming for a cup of coffee. The baristas welcome you and work to learn what you like. Their goal is to get to know you so that each time you return; they know how you like your beverage. The restaurant is set up for community: small intimate conversations. They design the place as a place you want to come and stay. People come to Starbucks not just for the beverage, but for the conversations and community. The Starbucks experience continues as a person buys coffee and products for use outside the restaurant. The baristas

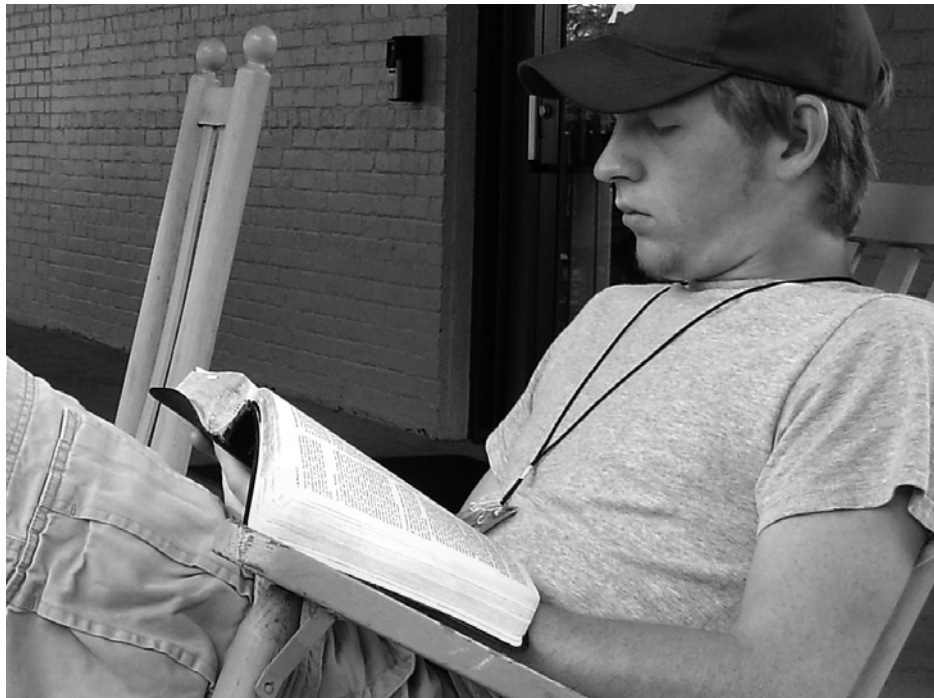
want to create an experience in which you not only return, but you bring others with you. You first connect with the coffee, then connect with the coffee community, and finally bring others into the environment.

Youth Sunday School is not a coffeehouse and you are not a barista, but we are also about making connections. We are going to look at three ways students make connections in a Bible study class.

2. OVERVIEW OF CLASS, COMMUNITY, COMMISSION (15 min.)

Provide a brief overview of the three different levels in which a Youth Sunday School class can operate. Distribute HANDOUT 1 "Connections Overview" and encourage them to take notes. Walk conferees through the chart to compare and contrast the differences between class, community, and commission. [SLIDES 4-12]

Make reference to LifeWay's KNOW, OWN, KNOWN strategy for student development by saying: You will probably recognize that these three class levels actually coincide with LifeWay's strategy for student development guiding students to KNOW GOD (Class: open groups for the lost – lordship, discipline), OWN THEIR FAITH (Community: character, discernment and relationships), and MAKE HIM KNOWN (Commission: Influence). For more information on the complete ministry strategy checkout www.lifeway.com/known. [SLIDE 13]



3. TEAM COMPARISONS (20 min.)

Divide conferees into four teams and distribute the team assignments of HANDOUT 2: "Connections Comparisons." Provide large sheets of paper for teams 3 and 4.

- Team 1: Discuss the difference in the focus of each level for the church youth and present a skit that highlights the characteristics of each level.
- Team 2: Discuss the difference in the focus of each level for the unchurched youth and present a skit that highlights the characteristics of each level.
- Team 3: Discuss the difference in the nature of prayer and the types of lists used and create a visual that highlights the characteristics of each level.
- Team 4: Discuss the difference in the type of organization needed in each level and create a visual that highlights the characteristics of each level. Instruct the teams to review Connect 3 for the information needed. Give them 15 minutes to review and discuss, and use the remaining five minutes for each team to make their presentation.

4. OPEN GROUPS (10 min.)

Say: Now that we have a broad view of the three levels of a Sunday School class, let's look specifically at a few elements.

Ask: **What makes a Sunday School class different from other types of classes?** Point their attention to the distinction of open groups. [SLIDE 14] Acknowledge the benefits of a closed group, but suggest that Sunday morning may not be the best time to conduct closed groups. Student Sunday School as an open group, should take place at the same time as the other age groups in the church. The strength of an open group in Sunday School is that it provides both foundational evangelism and discipleship; it is ongoing and allows new students to join at any time; and it includes an intentional mix of believers and unbelievers.

5. FINDING COMMUNITY (20 min.)

Say: Our goal is to move a Youth Sunday School class from being just a class; we want it to become a community too. [SLIDE 15]

To lead conferees to think about what builds community, direct them to form pairs and to work quickly to discover something they share in common. Instruct them not to use the obvious, such as they both go to church, work with youth, and so forth. As soon as a pair finds something in common, they are to shout it out. As each pair shouts out their commonality, they are to connect with another pair and find something different that all four of them share together. Challenge them to do this as a fast game. (If you have a large group, begin with a group of four to combine with another group of four and repeat the exercise. Do this until the entire group finds something they all share in common.)

Lead conferees in a discussion of the following:

1. **What is the danger that needs to be avoided in becoming a community?** (*There is a tendency for community groups to become closed groups, so focused on themselves that they do not include others.*)
2. **What are some things a community class can do to ensure that they also stay an open group?**
3. **What are some ways to build true community in a class?**
4. **Remembering the biblical mandate for community comes from the Great Commandment, what are some ways we can lead students to show love to each other?**

6. CARE GROUP LEADERS (10 min.)

Review the information in *Connect 3* (pages 25-27) about the value of using care group leaders. Ask if any of the conferees are currently using care group leaders. Discuss some practical ways to implement the use of care groups. Suggest that care groups should not be large—3-5 students in a group—and groups should be guys only or girls only. [SLIDE 16] Stress that the care group leader is to make some kind of *intentional* contact during the week to offer prayer, encouragement, and a reminder about Bible study. Ask: **What are some of the ways care group leaders can stay in touch with their group?** (*Face-to face conversations, text messages, facebook/IM, phone*) Encourage them to write down the names of some students who they could enlist to serve as care group leaders.

7. BECOMING A COMMISSION CLASS (10 min.)

Say: **Our goal as a community class is to become a class that focuses on others also and become a class that reaches out to the lost. Ask: Where is the first place your class can begin to do evangelism?** (*In the class itself.*) Remind them that an open group will have non-Christians in the mix, and teachers should look for opportunities both in the class and outside the class to lead those students to faith in Christ.

8. THE ROLE OF PRAYER (15 min.)

Remind conferees of the importance of prayer in every aspect of Sunday School ministry, but use this time to discuss the role of prayer in reaching lost students. Point conferees to the emphasis of praying for FRANs by pointing to the four letters posted around the room. Review FRANs' prayer emphasis on friends, relatives, acquaintances, and neighbors.

To help their students think of specific students, distribute HANDOUT 3 "Connecting Through Prayer" and point their attention to the nine squares. Encourage them to use this diagram with their students. Students are to choose one of their classes at school and let the middle square represent their seat. Students are to write the names of the students that sit in the desks surrounding them. Any student that sits around them that is not a Christian—or if they are not sure—is someone for whom the class can pray.

Suggest that they also create a large bulls-eye as depicted on HANDOUT 4. Students are to write on sticky notes the names of their lost friends for whom they are praying. Those names go on the outer circle. As the lost friend is exposed to the gospel through a witness (or visiting the class), the sticky name with his or her name is moved to the middle circle. Once that student has become a Christian, the sticky note is moved to the center circle. The bulls-eye serves as both a reminder to pray and as an encouragement to see how God is working.

9. EVALUATION (10 min.)

Distribute copies of HANDOUT 5 "Evaluation" and instruct conferees to evaluate the current status of their Sunday School class. Have them circle one weak area that they will go back and work on immediately.

As time allows, invite conferees to share some things they plan to do to move their class to being a community and/or things they plan to do to move to commission.

Close with group prayer and ask the conferees to pray for each other in their respective Sunday School ministries.

