



# **Extreme** Sunday School **Challenge**

Engaging Our  
World Through  
New Groups

## **Talking Points**

10 stories with questions to help church leaders  
and Bible study leaders begin to discuss how  
their church can start new Bible study groups

## Using Talking Points

The purpose of Talking Points is to provide a means by which leaders of churches of all sizes can train and challenge ongoing small group Bible study leaders.

### Ways to use Talking Points

**With a small group of leaders around a table at the local coffee house or restaurant.** You can either read the story and discuss the questions around the table, send the story as an email prior to the meeting and then present the questions for discussion around the table, or send as an email the story and the questions prior to meeting for coffee or a meal. This PDF is not locked so you can select text, copy it, and paste it into an email or word processor.)

**With all leaders in a conference setting.** Build a training time around one of the talking points. During the meeting, read or distribute the talking point sheet and lead the group to discuss their responses. Point to appropriate sections (see below) of *Extreme Sunday School Challenge* (available from LifeWay.com – print for \$1.50 or free PDF download).

**In discussion groups.** Place the leaders in smaller groups where they can discuss the story and questions. After allowing time, call for groups to share insights. Present content from your personal study and *Extreme Sunday School Challenge* to reinforce the point made.

**Create your own talking points and questions.** Use the talking point stories as a starting place for writing your own stories that may better fit your situation.

Connection between each Talking Point sheets and content in *Extreme Sunday School Challenge* (available from LifeWay.com/DavidFrancis; in print and as free PDF download)

1 Why do it?	pages 8-9, 30-31
2 A Group on Mission	pages 12-13, 30-32
3 Leaving Home	pages 14-15, 19-28,32
4 Sponsors	-----
5 Enroll in Line	pages 29-30
6 Apprentice	page 28
7 Really Open?	Pages 7, 36
8 Donuts	pages 36-37
9 Stairway class	pages 38-42
10 Where to start?	-----

**Talking Points** was written by G. Dwayne McCrary, team leader for LifeWay's ongoing adult Bible study curriculum and an experienced starter of new Bible study groups.

## TALKING POINTS

### Why Do it?

The conference leader began by asking a simple question: how would you define Sunday School? The typical answers were given. Bible study, reaching arm of the church, place people connect with others. The follow up question was not as easy. He asked, “why do you do Sunday School, regardless of how you define it?” Austin sat quietly along with the other conferees hoping the conference leader didn’t call on him specifically to answer. After some silence, one conferee stated he did Sunday School because that was what his church had always done. Another conferee shared that she taught Sunday School because teaching helped her be a better Bible student. A third conferee explained that he did Sunday School because he wanted to see a lost person accept Christ in the next six months. With each response, Austin continued to look for his answer to why. He agreed with the reasons stated, but he felt there had to be a deeper reason for him.

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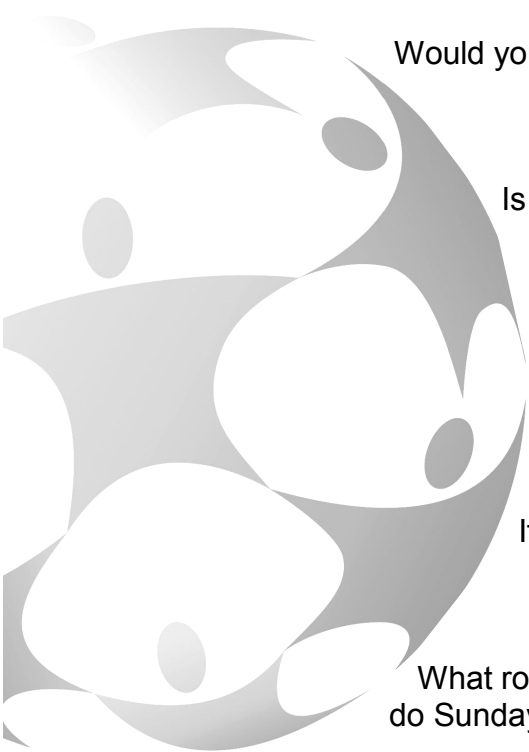
Would you agree with the three responses given? Explain.

Is there a deeper reason for doing Sunday School?

If one of our church leaders had been present, how do you think they would have responded to the why question?

If you had been Austin, how would you respond?

What role should a desire to make disciples play in why someone would do Sunday School?




## **TALKING POINTS**

### **A Group on Mission**

The church conducts an annual fall festival complete with jump houses, cake walks, and candy. Every Bible study group is called upon to create and work a booth for the event. Announcements were made by the pastor, calling on each class to get involved. Normally, the older children's class would be thinking about being participants, but not this year. Instead, several of the children want to create their own booth. Their teacher has dismissed their pleas so far, but the children have continued to ask to create and work a booth. The teachers invited the festival coordinator to visit with the class reminding them that the festival was for them to enjoy and to invite their friends. Patiently enduring the presentation, one of the boys in the class asked, "Who would know how to create something for a sixth grader better than another sixth grader?"

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How would you respond to the boy's question?

What opportunities for service does our church offer? What opportunities for service exist for preschoolers? For children? For students? For young adults? For senior adults?

In the situation above, what lesson or lessons could be taught to adults by the older children's class?

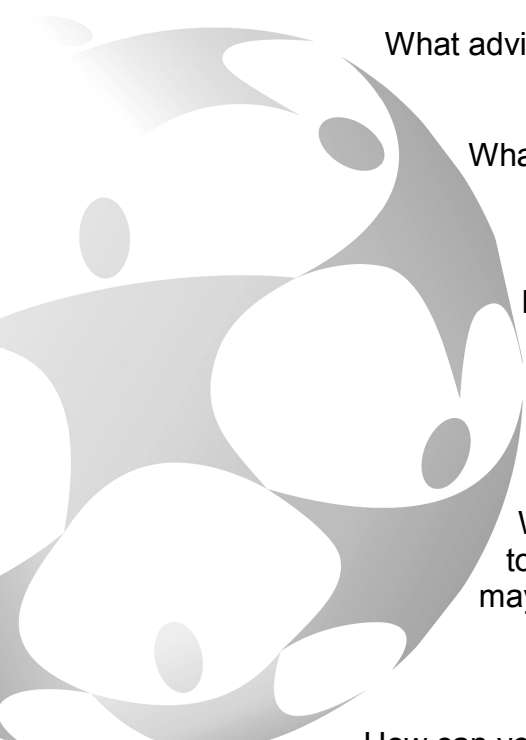
How can being involved in a project as a group strengthen a Bible study group? How could involvement move individuals forward as disciples?

## TALKING POINTS

### Leaving Home

Jon and Rachael were excited for their son when he went off to college in a neighboring state. He had worked hard to meet the academic requirements and they knew it was the right school for him. The change had been a good experience for both them and their son. But that all changed when he brought a young lady home to meet his parents. They liked her, but she was from a different state and it was obvious to Jon and Rachael that if the relationship blossomed, their son would live four hundred miles away. They were happy for him to get an education in another state, but the possibility of him not returning home after graduation had never crossed their minds. A few weeks after bringing his girlfriend home, the son returned by himself. He was there to ask them what they thought about his girlfriend and how they felt about him marrying her. He was also there to tell them he had a job waiting for him after graduation, only 30 minutes from his girlfriend's hometown.

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What advice would you give Jon and Rachael?

What advice would you give their son? The girlfriend?

How would that advice compare to what you would tell someone who was thinking about leaving your class to start a new group?

What can you as a teacher do to encourage people in your class to help start new groups? How can you address excuses they may have for not leaving your class?


How can you deal with your own feelings if a person felt they were to help start a new group in your church?

## TALKING POINTS

### Sponsors

After reading about the start of a new Bible study group for college-added ladies, Ms. Hufffy approached her class about sponsoring the new group. Her idea was to begin with praying for the leaders of the new group. Her second idea was to host a cooking party. The cooking party would give a reason for the young ladies to attend and a venue for the leaders of the new Bible study group to meet potential members for their class. The rest of Ms. Hufffy's class loved the idea, so she contacted the leaders of the new class. Ms. Hufffy wasn't sure how to get the word out about the party, but a couple of the ladies in the class had granddaughters attending the local college so they took care of that. Ms. Hufffy typed her favorite recipes into a computer with the idea of gathering the emails of everyone present so she could send them the document. The day of the party, she and others prepared food and gathered items to demonstrate some of their cooking tricks to the college ladies. As the guests arrived, Ms. Hufffy greeted everyone with a handshake and a plate of goodies. Now it was time for her and the other ladies to share about their two loves...cooking and Jesus.

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What other things do you think Ms. Hufffy and her class could do to help the new Bible study group get started and become healthy?

What kind of things could your class do to help a new group get started?

If Mr. Hufffy's class had not been willing to help, how could she have helped the new group get started?


How did this partnership help the new group? How did it help the senior ladies group?

## TALKING POINTS

### Enroll in Line

Gene wondered what would happen if he used the time spent in check-out lines to enroll people in a Bible study at his church. He picked the longest line and began a conversation with the person in front of him. At just the right time, he said, “We talked about that in my Bible study group just a few weeks ago.” He then invited the person to attend one of the Bible study groups at his church, offering to enroll them. They said yes, so he got the needed information and thanked the person for their time. He promised someone would be contacting them before Sunday. As soon as he was checking out, Gene contacted the Bible study leader for the group the person would most likely attend. He expected that teacher to take the next step and call the newly enrolled member. This conversation became a habit for Gene. Not everyone would say yes, but enough did to make it worth his effort. While most of the people he enrolled never attended his group, many attended a group and several became followers of Christ because of the conversation initiated while standing in line.

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How could a church make it easier for a person like Gene to enroll someone in a Bible study group?

How could a church help him know which group or groups might best fit a person he was seeking to enroll?

What would be a realistic goal for the number of people enrolled by one person in a month using this method? What would happen in our church if 3 people took this approach to enrolling people in a Bible study group?

What keeps people from initiating a conversation with others about their church and Bible study group?

In what other settings could a person initiate a conversation that might lead to enrolling someone in a Bible study group?

## TALKING POINTS

### Apprentice

Micah oversaw three Bible study groups, all for the same age, but with different target groups. All three groups gathered together before their study time and the groups would do a few things together every three of four months with Micah leading the way. Chuck had been enlisted to be his assistant. Micah was about to move and was grooming Chuck to take his responsibility. When Micah told Chuck that he wanted him to step into his role, Chuck was terrified. He had a passion for serving the leaders in the three groups but he was just not an up-front kind of guy. His giftedness was in service, not administration or hospitality. He knew Micah had gotten the wrong guy and wasn't shy about telling Micah. Micah assured him that he was the one and that he could set a new standard for how the responsibility was done. Micah challenged Chuck to find a way of using his giftedness (service) to accomplish the responsibilities of the job. His words were, "Look at the responsibilities and find a way to do each task as an act of service to the leaders, the group, or the church."

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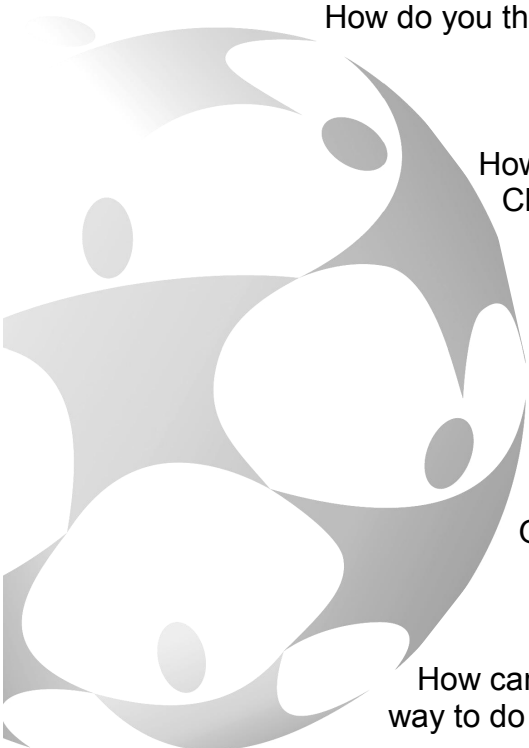
How do you think Chuck responded to Micah's challenge?

How would you respond to Micah's challenge if you had been Chuck?

What other encouragement could Micah offer Chuck?

How do you use your giftedness to accomplish the assignments God has given you?

How can you encourage someone else who may be gifted in a different way to do the same tasks?






## TALKING POINTS

### Really Open?

The room had empty chairs and a friendly greeter stood at the door ready to help. Extra personal study guides were available with a paper clip marking that day's lesson. Name tags were also available and the tags were all hand written so everyone was equal. Everything seemed to be in place for Santos to get the message that he was welcomed. However, the group time proved otherwise. Several in the group had been involved in the same mission project together. An illustration from that trip was used to make the big point in the study. Not enough details were given to make it possible for him to understand the illustration. Near the end of the group time, a party was "planned" with the one doing the planning directing everyone to meet at the same place as usual and to bring what they brought to the same party last year. Santos had no idea about what to wear, what to bring, or where the party would take place. He was thanked for attending and was encouraged to take a personal study guide for his own study. Santos held onto the study guide as he left the room, wondering if there was another group he could attend that might let him be a part.

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What makes you feel like an outsider when you are with a group of people?

What other unintentional things could a class do that would make someone feel like an outsider?

Would you consider your class open or closed to new people?  
What could you highlight to prove your point?


What advantage would it be for a new person in your church to attend a new Bible study group where everyone was new to the group?  
Would that help or hurt your church?

## TALKING POINTS

### Donuts

On his way to his Sunday morning Bible study group, Josh ran into a local donut shop. He had forgotten it was his Sunday to provide a snack and the donut shop offered a quick cover-up for his forgetfulness. While ordering, he noticed stacks of boxes filled with donuts, each stack carrying the name of a different church in the area. He asked and discovered that a person or group could place a standing order. He told his class about it and they agreed to Josh initiating a standing order and picking up the donuts every week. For several weeks, Josh picked up the donuts for his class, always seeing the same people working. He drove by the shop on his way home and noticed that those same people were finished with their work day just after noon. He realized that this group of workers were unable to attend any of the Bible study groups who purchased their donuts. He wished there was some way for them to experience what he did every Sunday.

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What possible solutions could Josh offer to the people at the donut shop so they could be a part of a Bible study group?

What groups in your community are unable to attend a Bible study group because of their work schedules?

What percentage of people in your community would you estimate fall into one of the groups you identified?


What possible solutions could your church offer to the people you identified so they could be part of a Bible study group?

## TALKING POINTS

### Stairway Class

The high school boys class had grown with Walt as the teacher. What had once been one of the weakest groups was now one of the strongest and healthiest in the church. Walt knew there were more high school boys to reach and he really wanted to focus on seniors. He had been preparing an apprentice who could take over the current class minus the high school seniors. But the problem was where to meet. Three groups were already meeting in the worship center. Every room had a group in it except the pastor's office. His choices were to meet in the worship center and compete with the other three groups, take over the pastor's office, meet offsite, or use a stairway leading up to the baptistery area. It was his choice and he chose the stairway. There were 26 steps which meant he could put two boys on every other step and the boys would still be comfortable. His new "room" was actually larger than his old one. A date was set and Walt launched his new class...in the stairway.

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If you had been Walt, which option would you have selected? What factors weight the most in your choice?

How could Walt use the stairway space to his advantage? How could he make it a positive?

What space in your church facilities could be used by a new group? What group or groups would that space most likely accommodate?

What other possibilities exist as a place for a new group to get started?

## TALKING POINTS

### Where to Start?

Marsha had been watching with interest to see what happened. Her church recently became part of a network to help pregnant teenagers in their community. The network assisted girls who were going to put their baby up for adoption. The financial needs of each girl were covered already, so the role of the church was to provide emotional support. Each girl was assigned a volunteer who will be available to that girl for up to one year following the birth of the baby. Marsha noticed that many of the girls attended worship services, but few if any ever attended a Bible study group. Some of them tried a group, but never found one that was really for them. Marsha knew their frustration. She had a child while a college freshman that had been adopted by a great couple. She wanted to help provide a Bible study group just for these girls, but had no idea where to start.

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What would you tell Marsha if she asked you to help her put together a plan for starting a new Bible study group for pregnant teenagers?

How could you help someone like Marsha who has a passion for a specific group to start a targeted Bible study group?

What group of people do you see that need a Bible study group that is currently not provided by your church?

What steps are needed to start a Bible study just for the group of people you identified?

