

Teaching Plan for Adults



Great Expectations:

Planting Seeds for Sunday School Growth

Prepared by:

David Apple, Adult Ministry Specialist, LifeWay Christian Resources

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

How to use this plan

- For the local church: Use to train Adult Sunday School leaders and members during a local church training or kick-off event.
- For regional and state training: Use to train Adult Sunday School leaders and members in state or associational training events.

Preparation

Gather the following materials:

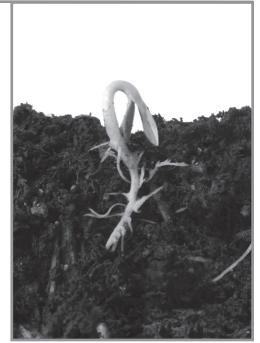
- Bibles for participants who may not bring their own.
- Large sheets of paper or large marker board with markers and eraser for recording responses.
- For Step 3, Leader Guides and Learner Guides for the current Bible study curriculum (each participant will need either a Leader Guide or a Learner Guide).
- **OPTIONAL:** Large perennial plant that can be divided to demonstrate how it will grow and produce more flowers and generally be a healthier plant (see Step 5).
- Provide one copy of *Great Expectations: Planting Seeds for Sunday School Growth* by David Francis for each participant. The book is available three ways: 1) Print copies from the file provided on this CD-Rom. 2) Download the file from www.LifeWay.com/SundaySchool and make copies. 3) Order copies for \$1 each at www.LifeWay.com/SundaySchool.

Download the following materials:

- PowerPoint presentation: Great Expectations for Sunday School Growth — Adults.
- Handouts 1-5 that are part of this teaching plan.
- LifeWay research particularly regarding young adults and boomer adults (www.LifeWay.com/research). Be prepared to overview highlights of research that relate to young adults, emerging older adults, and opportunities for mentoring (see Step 2).

Make copies of the following handouts, one for each participant:

- Handout 1: The Core of the Matter
- Handout 2: Evaluate from Different Perspectives
- Handout 3: Strengthen Three Steps for Bible Study
- Handout 4: We Expect People to Say "Yes"
- Handout 5: We Expect to Reproduce



Prepare a display of the following resources:

- *Great Expectations: Planting Seeds for Sunday School Growth* by David Francis
- Sample of LifeWay Adult Sunday School resources, including Leader Packs, Leader Guides, and Learner Guides
- Sample of Devotional Guides and Ministry Magazines (such as HomeLife, ParentLife, Living with Teenagers, Mature Living).

Prepare the room for learning that helps adults focus on great expectations:

- Arrange chairs in a semi-circle facing a focal wall.
- Place nametags and marking pens at or near chairs for participants to prepare their own nametag.
- Arrange AV equipment for PowerPoint presentation (screen, extension cord with multiple plug outlets), a large marker board with markers and eraser (or easel with large sheets of paper).
- Provide CD player and selected disc for background music (OPTIONAL).
- Display pictures on focal wall from magazines, etc. that depict seeds, seedlings, and fruit.
- Include pictures of a variety of ages, life stages, and cultures of adults (OPTIONAL).

PROCEDURES

STEP 1: Introduction, Get Acquainted (5 minutes)

As participants arrive, encourage them to find a seat and make a nametag by printing their name using a marker pen provided. (Slide 1) Provide background music on a CD player (OPTIONAL).

Welcome participants. Invite them to form teams of three persons and share expectations they have of the training experience and of their Sunday School class. (Slide 1) After allowing teams to brainstorm for two minutes, invite responses. Record responses on a large sheet of paper or on a marker board. Briefly overview that this training will help adult class leaders and members focus on how we can strengthen our Sunday School.

Lead in prayer.

STEP 2: What is there to expect? (15 minutes)

Distribute Handout 1: Core of the Matter. Lead participants to read Acts 4:29-37 to themselves. (Slide 2) Lead participants to overview five priorities that were the focus of the early church.

Emphasize each of the following:

- Pray boldly (4:29-30) (Slide 3)
- Assemble expectantly (4:31)
- Launch lasting impact (4:32-33)
- Provide for needs (4:34-35)
- Encourager discovered (4:36-37)

Be prepared to supplement each point as appropriate. Emphasize research regarding young adults and emerging older adults particularly regarding the need and opportunity for mentoring, encouraging, and intergenerational ministries. Emphasize that these core priorities come as a result of people connecting with the Lord through worship and prayer. Call attention to the CONNECT logo.

Highlight three significant expectations. (Slide 4) Explain that the training will focus on a Great Expectation Sunday School. Distribute copies of *Great Expectations: Planting Seeds for Sunday School Growth* to each participant and emphasize that this book builds on other books written by David Francis (*The 5 Step Formula for Sunday School Growth*, *The 3D Sunday School*; I-6: *Six-Lane Strategy Toward an Inviting Sunday School*; *The Discover Triad: Three Facets of a Dynamic Sunday School Class*; *Connect³: The Power of One Sunday School Class*.)

STEP 3: Great Expectation #1: New people experience Great Bible study each week (40 minutes)

Emphasize that the first expectation is for new people to connect each week in meaningful, life-changing Bible study. (Slide 4) Emphasize the need and opportunity to help adults grow as they discover and apply God's Word. Call attention to the GROW logo. This is part of the strategy of building disciples.

Call attention to the two extremes: content and community. (Slide 5) Lead participants to briefly discuss the challenges and opportunities of focusing on content and on community and the need to have a balance of these in Sunday School.

Distribute Handout 2: Evaluate from Different Perspectives. Call attention to the three persons or groups identified at the top of the sheet. (Slide 6) Invite participants to imagine that these persons will help us evaluate the work of our class. Call attention to the expectations listed on the left side of the sheet. Explain that each of these is referenced as an expectation in an Adult Sunday School class.

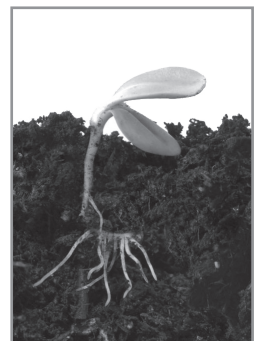
Invite participants to start thinking how they would evaluate each of the expectations through the eyes and experience of those listed in the three categories. Invite participants to form teams of three persons. Assign each team one of the expectations on the left side of the sheet. Allow teams five minutes to discuss how those in the three categories would evaluate their class (positive as well as challenges). Encourage teams to identify ideas to help strengthen their assigned expectation from the perspective of each category of person. (Slides 7-8) After calling time, invite everyone to stand, get with someone from a different team, and share ideas to help strengthen their Sunday School.

Distribute Handout 3: Strengthen Three Steps for Bible Study. Lead participants to list and examine the three significant steps for each Bible study experience (Slide 9):

- Introduction/Create Interest
- Encounter God's Word
- Bring Closure

Call attention to the list and examine three significant teaching and learning methods (Slide 10):

- Question/answer
- Stories/illustrations/object lessons
- Discussion



Emphasize that there are things that class members as well as the teacher can do to prepare for and engage in each of the three steps of the Bible study session.

Instruct participants to get back in their team of three. Assign half the teams to read Mark 4:13-20 and the other half to read Mark 4:26-32. (Slide 11)

Invite each team to examine ways Jesus involved His students in each of the three significant steps of a Bible study experience. Also, lead each team to identify how Jesus incorporated significant teaching and learning methods as He taught in those situations.



OPTION: Distribute copies of Leader and/or Learner Guides for current Adult Sunday School curriculum resources. In teams of three teachers or class members, invite participants to select the lesson for the upcoming week and identify at least one specific suggestion they would use in each of the three steps for the Bible study experience.

In the same teams of three, invite participants to identify at least one example in the lesson of each of the three methods they would want to use as a teacher or as a learner. Even if this assignment is not completed during the training session, encourage participants to overview their upcoming lesson and identify ways the lesson incorporates the three steps and a variety of teaching and learning approaches.

Review the first Great Expectation: Expect new people every week in a meaningful Bible study experience. (Slide 12) Invite participants to brainstorm suggestions they have discovered or re-discovered to strengthen this expectation in their class. Record responses on the marker board or large sheet of paper.

STEP 4: Great Expectation #2: Expect People to Say “Yes” (20 minutes)

Call attention to the second expectation: Expect People to say “Yes.” Briefly explain this expectation. (Slide 13)

Distribute copies of Handout 4: We Expect People to Say “Yes.” Review the checklist from items identified in *Great Expectations: Planting Seeds for Sunday School Growth*. Lead participants to rate their class using a scale of 1-10 (1 indicates “we rarely if ever do this;” 10 indicates “we do this all the time”). (Slide 14)

We invite non-members to attend.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
We invite non-members to enroll.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
We prepare for class.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
We participate in class.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
We serve within the class.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
We engage care group leaders to respond to members' needs.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
We engage associate members/missionaries from the class.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
We pray for unsaved persons.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
We participate in training.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
We distribute literature to members and prospects.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
We visit (face to face) with prospects.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

After participants have evaluated their class based on these statements, invite participants to select any three statements from the list. For those statements evaluated low, lead participants to identify ideas to start or strengthen these actions. For those statements evaluated high, lead participants to identify ideas/ actions taken that help make these a success. After 3-4 minutes of listing ideas, invite participants to get in new teams of three persons and share ideas. Encourage persons to learn from each other.

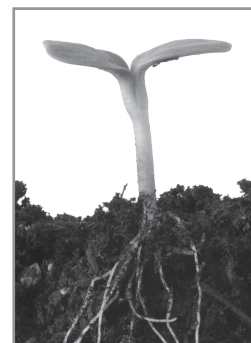
Be prepared to overview selected statements and reinforce suggestions to help Sunday School leaders and members build great expectation Sunday School classes. (Slides 15-17)

Reveal a visual with the following statement: "We must get people out of rows and into circles. We must get people out of circles and engaged in service and missions." (Slide 18) Briefly explain (using information from page 26) that "rows" could mean that members are expecting to engage in meaningful Bible study. Emphasize that "circles" could mean that members are engaging in meaningful Bible study and building community with each other. Emphasize that "engaged in service and missions" could mean that members are expecting to impact persons outside the class.

Call attention to the SERVE logo, and emphasize that part of the strategy for adult classes is to help people serve within the church. Then, call attention to the GO logo, and emphasize that adults must be given opportunity to minister and connect with people outside the church.

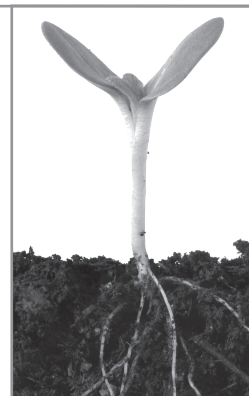
Invite participants into three teams. Assign each team one of the following: (Slide 19)

If we could only get members and prospects into "rows," how could we affirm our members and be the best class possible?



If we could only get members and prospects into "circles," how could we affirm our members and be the best class possible?

If we could get our members and prospects engaged in service and missions, how could we affirm our members and be the best class possible?



Step 5: Great Expectation #3: Expect classes to reproduce (20 minutes)

Reveal visual with a variety of examples of things that are the result of reproduction (babies, flowers/plants, etc.) (Slide 20) Call attention to a potted perennial plant and explain that these plants are designed to flower, grow, then be separated so they can grow and produce more flowers. If a plant is available, demonstrate how the plant root can be divided and several plants can then be transplanted for future growth. Explain that if the plant is not divided at appropriate times, then eventually it will likely choke itself from growing further (OPTIONAL).

Lead participants to discuss similarities between things that are designed to reproduce and open Bible study classes. Call attention to the third Great Expectation: "Expect to Reproduce."

Distribute Handout 5: We Expect to Reproduce. Read or tell the story, "That's part of your problem." Call attention to factors mentioned in this story that are important for starting new classes. Read this brief story and allow participants to fill in the blanks on the handout.

"That's Part of Your Problem!"

We were in a fairly new church that had great potential for reaching people. The church had already maxed out on space and was using most every person who would serve in a leadership capacity. I had attended Sunday School Week at Ridgecrest where I heard leaders emphasize the need to start new Bible study groups in order to reach more people. I left the training committed to helping our church start new classes. It seemed that everyone in the church agreed to the opportunity, but I could not find any workers who could help take the class. We determined to start a young singles class since the church was across from a major university. One other person agreed to help me start the class. The problem for both of us was that neither had any real clue as to what to do in starting the class. That's when I talked with the teacher of the oldest ladies' class who was like the matriarch of the church. I told her about our plans to start a new class. She gave me three things to do.

1. "Give me a list of members of your class." (Slide 21)
I indicated to her that we did not even have a list of people. She shook her boney little finger at me and said, "That's part of your problem!" She went on to say that every class needs a list of persons who are enrolled in the class. This becomes the ministry list. She said, "As soon as you give me a list of people, my ladies will start praying each day for your class members by name."
2. "Give me a list of prospects you are wanting to become part of your class." (Slide 22)
I indicated that we knew we were going to try to reach singles, but I did not have a list of specific people. She shook her boney little finger at me and said, "That's part of your problem!" She went on to say that every class needs a list of people who are prospects for

the class. You need to know how to get in touch with these persons and know how you can pray specifically for them. They need to know how they can get in touch with you. She said, "You know my ladies cannot make visits at night, but we can make phone calls. You give me a list of prospects with the right information, and my ladies will call each person and invite them to your class and to church."

3. "Give me the dates and location of the first three times you plan to have a social with the persons you want to be in the class." (Slide 23)

I indicated that we really had not planned any specific time for fellowship. Once again, she pointed her boney little finger at me and said, "That's part of your problem!" She went on to say that every class needs several times when the members get together with prospects for a time of fellowship when they can get to know each other. New classes need more time at the beginning than those which have already been meeting. She said, "My ladies are getting ready to have a 'class meeting,' (what most classes now call a class social) and we want to invite your class as our guests." Although I did not say these words, I was thinking: "This just will not work. We're talking about a bunch of little old ladies meeting with a bunch of young single adults." She looked at me, pointed her boney little finger and said, "That's part of your problem ... You leave this up to me and my class."

Frankly, I forgot all about her invitation, but I did remember that she had invited me and my wife to her ladies' class meeting (where they always brought some of the best food around). A couple weeks later, my wife and I came to her class meeting. There we saw several little old ladies who we had come to know and love. We also saw several young adults we really had never seen. I went to this godly and beloved teacher and said, "Who are all these young people?" She pointed her little boney finger at me and said, "That's part of your problem! These are the people who would be in your Sunday School class. We've been calling them, praying for them, and getting to know them. What have you been doing all this time?"

I saw something I really had never experienced before. I saw a bunch of little old ladies loving on a bunch of young adults the age of their grandchildren (and great grandchildren). I saw a bunch of young adults who were loving every minute of the attention given by these dear saints of God. I learned something remarkable as I watched and learned from the oldest ladies' class. I saw a class literally start a class without "splitting" or reorganizing.

Later, this teacher told me that the experience her class had in sponsoring the class "gave us something to live for." She reported that over the course of the following several years, her class repeated that action (praying for members, contacting prospects, and hosting a class fellowship) for a number of new classes. What a wonderful example of ways a class can help sponsor and start another class!!

Ask, "What are some things you learn from this leader that would help you influence your class to reproduce?" (Slide 24)

Lead participants to record factors that are in a Sunday School class that provide opportunities for new classes to be started.

* At least three people who are willing to be part of a new class (someone who will lead the class to discover God's Word, someone to invite persons to be part of the class, and someone to help the class with hospitality) (Slide 25)



* Prospects – At least three persons who are not members but would relate in some way to the life stage or interests of the class

* Place and time to meet

* Prayer for God to work in the lives of members and prospects (Slide 26)

* Passion for connecting with people not involved in Bible study, community, or ministry

* Purpose of encouraging people to be discipled so they can serve the Lord

Invite participants to brainstorm a list of ages, life stages, or life transitions that could possibly be the opportunity to start a new class through the ministry of participants' class or department. (Slide 27) Record these on the marker board or large sheet of paper. These can include, but are not limited to groups such as:

Newly wed couples

Parents of children or youth

Adults in blended families

Caregivers of aging parents

Persons attending worship but not Bible study

New parents

Recently retired

Persons in job transition

College or graduate students

Persons new to the community

Lead participants to dialog about opportunities and challenges they face in helping start at least one new class during the coming year. Call attention to ministry and devotional magazines that can be distributed to members and prospects.

STEP 6: Take and plant seeds! (10 minutes)

Remind participants of the three Great Expectations. (Slide 28) Review Handout 1, particularly the five core concepts of an Adult Sunday School class. Emphasize that there are many ways of looking at and remembering the great expectations. Reveal that a Sunday School class is to bear fruit. Switch the order of the five core concepts, and celebrate that a Sunday School class is to: (Slide 29)

- Assemble expectantly
- Pray boldly
- Provide for needs
- Launch lasting impact
- Encourager discovered

Ask each participant to imagine they are holding an apple and a knife. Invite participants to pretend to slice their apple so they can determine how many seeds are in their apple. Invite several participants to share how many "seeds" they have "found" in their apple. (Slide 30) Then ask participants, "What are you supposed to do with seeds (plant them rather than merely hold, organize, file, or display them). Then, ask participants to "look at their apple seeds" and imagine how many apples are in those seeds; how many trees are in those apples. (Slide 31)

Encourage adults to make a commitment to build a great expectation Sunday School class as they help new people experience life-changing Bible study each week, as they help people say "yes" to ministry opportunities, and as they help start new classes. (Slide 32) Lead in a time of prayer and commitment.

