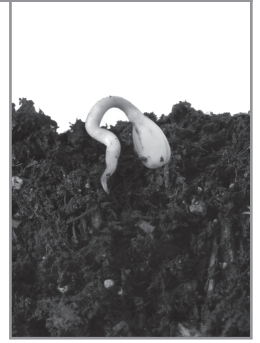


Teaching Plan for General Leadership



Great Expectations:

Planting Seeds for Sunday School Growth

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Purpose: To provide a two-hour teaching experience for 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 Sunday School leaders and members during a local church training or kick-off event.
- For regional and state training: Use to train Sunday School leaders and members in state or associational training events.

Preparation

- Provide a nametag for each participant. (A nametag template is provided on the CD-Rom in the Great Expectations Sunday School Launch Kit.)
- Copy and cut out sets of the Expectations Card (Handout 1).
- Review Parable of a Busy Church (Handout 2).
- Prepare copies of the following handouts:
 - * Expect New People Every Week (Handout 3)
 - * LifeSpan (Handout 4)
 - * Just Say "Yes" (Handout 5)
 - * Expect Classes to Reproduce (Handout 6)
- Prepare four tear sheets or posters. Title each tear sheet with one of the following titles—Crowd; Pharisees; Paralytic; Stretcher-Bearers.
- Secure a copy of the book, *How to Sunday School Manual*, by Wayne Poling. This is used as a reference. Become familiar with the information contained in the book and how it might be referenced as a tool for various subjects during the session.
- Secure appropriate LifeWay Sunday School curriculum for display and reference.
- 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.
- Read the book in preparation for this training.
- Purchase balloons, one for each participant expected. Provide balloons that participants can blow up easily. Place the balloons in chairs before the session.
- Provide felt-tip markers and tear sheets or posters.
- Review the PowerPoint. If you aren't using the PowerPoint, choose slides to print as posters.

STEP One: Introduction

As participants enter, give each person a different Expectations Card (Handout 1). Once everyone has arrived, explain that, in a moment you are going to look at Mark 2:1-12 (story of the paralytic). Jesus had just completed a synagogue tour and was back in Capernaum. News had spread about Jesus' arrival and a crowd had filled the house where He was teaching from the Word of God. It was a capacity crowd because they had great expectations—but not necessarily the same expectations.



Ask participants to listen from the perspective of the individual or group listed on their card and to consider what the expectations were for their assigned individual or group. (Slide 1)

Read Mark 2:1-12.

Instruct participants to find others who have the same assignment card they have and to move to the tear sheets and compile a list of expectations. They should introduce themselves to each other as well. Ask for each group to respond.

Option: If the group is small, modify the activity by using partners or by guiding the group to collectively discuss each assignment as you record their responses on the tear sheets.

Introduce yourself and explain that, just as in this situation, people and churches bring differing expectations to Sunday School. Explain that when you leave this session your hope is that participants will have learned or reaffirmed some great expectations to look for in a healthy Sunday School. But first you will look at some misguided or misunderstood expectations.

STEP Two: Misguided or Misunderstood Expectations

Sunday School: Auto Pilot Mode (Slide 2)

Read the Parable of a Busy Church (Handout 2) and ask the group to listen and identify the expectations this church has for Sunday School. Lead a discussion of what they heard. *Why did the expectations of Sunday School change? Can you identify factors that might be contributing to the problems their Sunday School is experiencing?*

Explain that for many churches, other activities and priorities have caused the expectations for Sunday School to be lowered. Yet, when growth begins to slow, the assumption is that Sunday School is no longer effective. In fact, the church has quit placing the energy and priority needed into Sunday School in order to make it effective.

Sunday School Schizophrenia (Slide 3)

Enlist three volunteers. Ask one to stand on one side of the room and one to stand on the other side of the room. Explain that the person on the left will represent "Biblical Community"—the desire to see people develop strong, healthy relationships; to experience community. The person on the other end will represent "Biblical Content"—the desire for deeper Bible study, deeper content. Imagine that the space between the two is a continuum. Ask the group to direct the third volunteer to stand where he believes Sunday School should land.

Option: Display a poster on one side of the room entitled "Biblical Community," and one on the other side of the room entitled "Biblical Content." Instruct participants to stand beside the poster they believe should

be the primary purpose of Sunday School. Once participants have moved to their chosen sides, lead them to debate why they chose what they did. Explain that participants can change their minds at any time during the debate. After debate, ask the group to imagine a continuum line connecting the two viewpoints. Where would you stand if this were a continuum?

Summarize the information on page 9 of *Great Expectations*, emphasizing that Sunday School should fit closer to the middle of the continuum, striking a balance between content and community. (Slide 4)

Each of these situations reveals something about how we have possibly lowered expectations or have misunderstood the purpose of Sunday School. I challenge you to think about what God can do through the movement known as Sunday School if you have some well defined expectations.

STEP Two: What Should We Expect?

Review pages 10-11 of Francis' book in preparation for sharing this information. Explain that research findings from Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger in *Simple Church* have revealed a two-step process for spiritual growth that healthy churches employ. Step One in the process is worship, especially the primary weekend worship experience. Step Two is participation in some sort of smaller group such as Sunday School. The study revealed a variety of small group expressions due to circumstances such as space limitations, age of the church, or cultural/community influences. However they observed that, "where culture and circumstances make an on-campus ministry like Sunday School possible, it is hard to beat in terms of helping a maximum number of people actually move from Step One to Step Two in a disciple-making process" (Francis, p. 10). (Slide 5)

Step Two Process Ratio Rating (Slide 6)

Guide the group to look at their Step Two Ratio Rating using the following formula:

1. Write down your average worship attendance for your primary worship service (best guess).
2. Write down your average in Sunday School or its equivalent (best guess).
3. Divide Step Two by Step One.

This number represents the effectiveness of your Step Two strategy. If your church utilizes Sunday School as a Step Two strategy, that ratio is typically 70% or higher. Discuss their findings. What does this reveal about your expectations of Sunday School?

In order to strengthen a strong Step Two strategy, a Great Expectations Sunday School will expect:

1. New people every week (they will experience great Bible study when they visit).
2. People to say "yes" (to the elements of a Great Expectations class).
3. Classes to reproduce (new classes and leaders). (Slide 7)

STEP Three: Expect New People Every Week

Refer to the story of the paralytic in Mark 2:1-12. Call attention to verse 6 and explain that many in the room were not expecting anyone else to try to "visit" that day. It paints a picture that they were there for what they could get. Many came to hear the Master Teacher teach the Scriptures. Ask the group to comment on what they might have thought or said when the stretcher-bearers began digging a hole in the roof.



The reality: Every week may be somebody's first week! (Slide 8)
Instruct the group to read Francis' "Worst Case Scenario" (page 15). Ask if they have had any similar experiences. *Would you return to a church after such a visit? Would an unchurched person (one without any church background) return? Why or why not?*



If it's not a good week, they may not ever come back for a second week.
Read "Why We Went Back Anyway," pages 15-16, and ask the group to listen to the reasons David returned. This is the foundation principle of a Great Expectations Sunday School. If a Sunday School really expects new people every week, that expectation will drive everything else before, during, and after Sunday School.

So, you have decided to be the kind of ministry that expects new people every week. So what might that look like? Divide participants into three groups. Distribute the handout, Expect New People Every Week (Handout 3). Assign the first group, "BEFORE"; assign the second group, "DURING"; assign the third group, "AFTER." Ask groups to consider these questions: *If you expect new people every week what are some things you will do during these times. What are elements you would focus upon?* Explain that they can refer to pages 17-21 and the handout for additional ideas. Use your own ideas as well. Discuss the ideas. (Slide 9)

Display the following quote (Slide 10): "How sad it would be if you did all this to get ready for company and you gave them a boxed meal you prepared on the way to church!" Emphasize the importance of Bible study preparation, not only for guests, but also for all participants. A well-prepared teacher is the apex of a Sunday School that expects new people every week.

Supplemental Activity: Refer to the handout, LifeSpan (Handout 5), emphasizing how LifeWay expects you to have new people every week and has designed a comprehensive plan for helping teachers. If appropriate, display LifeWay curriculum and invite participants to review the resources that can help them equip their leaders for focused and comprehensive Bible study.

Point out the importance of the actions that should take place after a guest attends. Emphasize a follow-up plan for all guests, including visitation. Discuss the importance of sharing the gospel when possible. Discuss David Francis' idea on page 38 as one way to make a home visit—"Try not to get in!" Emphasize that ongoing follow-up and immediate follow-up are both crucial.

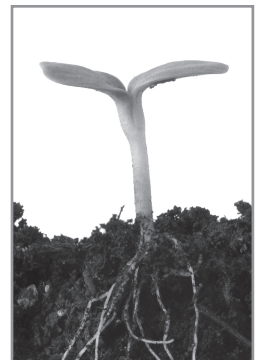
STEP Four: Expect People to Say "Yes"!

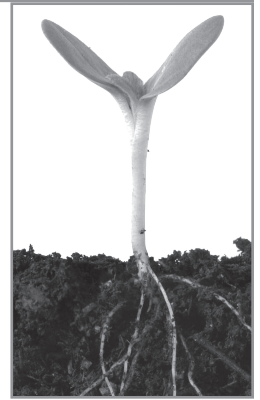
Write the following words on a poster or marker board: "Yes, Lord" (Slide 11). Emphasize that this should be our Sunday School mantra. We should expect people to say "yes!" Remind participants that there was a group that did say "yes" in the story of the paralytic. Refer to Mark 12:4, emphasizing the fact that this group did not take "no" for an answer. They worked and expected to get their friend to Jesus!

Distribute the handout Just Say "Yes" (Handout 5). If we say "no" for people without giving them an opportunity to say "yes," then we have lowered our expectations for Sunday School. Review the following points for each "Just Say Yes" statement and encourage participants to take notes. Supplement with information from chapter 2 of Francis' book, the provided PowerPoint, and your own experiences. Encourage participants to take notes on the "Just Say Yes" handout.

Option: As you refer to the Just Say "Yes" statements, ask the group to respond in unison by saying "yes" after you ask each question. Emphasize the fact that you are practicing the art of saying "yes!"

1. Would you come to Sunday School? (Slide 12)
 - Simply ask people. Say, "I'm part of a small Bible study group at my church that meets every Sunday. I'd love to see you come. Would you be willing to attend if I come and pick you up?"
 - Some may say "no" but many will say "yes."
2. Would you like to join our Sunday School class? (Slide 13)
 - Ask the group to brainstorm situations or circumstances in which you should ask individuals to join or enroll in Sunday School.
 - This should become the standard question when people visit, when people register for activities or for worship.
 - When should we enroll someone? (Anytime, anywhere, as long as they agree.)
 - Don't assume they will say "no." Just ask; they might say "yes!"
 - Emphasize having a strategy that includes capturing unenrolled church members. Unenrolled church members will most likely become inactive members due to a lack of connection to a Sunday School class.
 - Sunday School is one of the only places in which you can actually "belong before you believe."
3. Would you prepare for our study next week? (Slide 14)
 - We should expect members to study the Bible between sessions.
 - Encourage members to use learner guides. Some teachers have said, "Only a few members use the learner guide, so we are going to quit providing them." Through this action the teacher has just said "no" for everyone, including those who were using the learner guide! Don't dumb down everyone because some have said "no."
 - Ask the group to brainstorm ways in which they could help people use the learner guide for weekly Bible study.
 - Give guests a learner guide. When you have prospects or worship guests that have never been to your class, take them a learner guide and show them how to use it.
 - Use at least one activity from the learner guide each week during the session.
 - If appropriate, allow participants to observe, review, or hear about available LifeWay learner guide options.
4. Would you participate in class? (Slide 15)
 - Some teachers say "no" to class involvement when they say, "My group doesn't like small group activities; they just want me to tell them what I learned."
 - A teacher's job is to teach learners to discover what he has already discovered. Don't just teach the Bible, but teach learners how to study the Bible. Teachers should not become their learners' commentary!
 - Refer to the Leader Guide teaching helps. Emphasize engaging learners through a variety of learning activities. Point out the Leader Guide options for teaching and how each Leader Guide provides a variety of age-appropriate and content-appropriate learning activities.
 - Refer to supplemental teaching helps that are provided for some materials (*QuickSource*, *LifeWay Extra!*, etc.)
5. Would you serve as a class leader? (Slide 16)
 - Don't say "no" by not asking for leaders or asking in the incorrect way.
 - An announcement is the least effective way. You don't have much response, it sounds like you are begging and don't have a strategy, and you might get a volunteer that you can't use.
 - Brainstorm ways to discover leaders.





- Suggest they pass cards out to adult Sunday School teachers and ask them to make a list of potential leaders. Then spend time enlisting those leaders for various positions.
- Enlist leaders in advance and one-on-one. Take time to enlist. Don't beg. Provide training.
- Reaffirm current leaders annually. Discuss ways in which this can be done.
- Train your directors to enlist leaders. Work with them to plan, identify, and enlist leaders.
- Keep your structure simple. Don't just fill slots. Enlist key positions first. Refer to helps for identifying and enlisting leaders including job descriptions at www.LifeWay.com/SundaySchool. Search on "Sunday School Index" for ideas, or go to the "Helpful Links" and look for ideas.
- Refer to ideas in the *How to Sunday School Manual* by Wayne Poling.

6. Would you serve as a care group leader in an adult class? (Slide 17)

- Organize small ministry groups with a maximum of eight individuals.
- Organize by gender in a coed class.
- Include members-in-service and a mix of actives and inactives for each leader.
- Consider providing time for care groups to meet during class—weekly, monthly, or quarterly.
- Develop an ongoing plan for contacting each member weekly, especially absentees: phone call, card, visit, weekly e-mail, etc.
- Become an ACE at contacts: Absentee contacts; Crisis contacts; Encouragement contacts.

7. As a student or child, will you help? (Slide 18)

- Lead workers to involve kids and students, too.
- Don't lower expectations due to age.
- Ask the group to brainstorm ways in which they can involve kids and students.

8. Will you serve beyond the class session? (Slide 19)

- Make Sunday School your base of operations for ministry and missions.
- Ed Stetzer, Director of LifeWay Research, encourages Sunday School classes and small groups to accept the challenge to become "small missional communities." Dr. Stetzer contends that, if Christians are going to effectively engage the world around them, they are more likely to do it with a class or group as the base of operations than from the pew.
- How can you lead kids—students—adults to become involved in ministry and missions? What are some ideas you have used? Based on what you know about your area, what can your classes do? Everyone write down ideas.
- Refer to pages 28-30 for ideas: serving as an age-group teacher (associate member); benevolence ministry, rescue mission, hospital, apartment building, high rise, street, neighborhood, cul-de-sac; search www.imb.org (International Mission Board) and adopt an unreached people group.
- The key is doing something together, not as individuals or waiting for the announcement from the pulpit.

9. Will you pray for the lost? (Slide 20)

- How many of your prayer requests in Sunday School are for members, physical needs, personal needs? How many are for the lost?
- Start praying for the lost. Develop a FRAN list by class (Friends; Relatives; Associates; Neighbors) and lead groups to pray and contact individuals listed.

10. Will you attend regular leadership meetings? (Slide 21)

- By far the number one reason Sunday School leaders don't attend leadership meetings is that their expectations about the value of those meetings has diminished over time.
- You shouldn't expect busy leaders to attend boring, announcement-oriented, poorly planned, low-energy, unrewarding leadership meetings (Francis, p. 31-32).
- Ask participants to share ideas about frequency and style of meetings.
- Consider other means of communicating—web page, e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

11. Will you attend training? (Slide 22)

- Refer to page 32-34 in Francis' book for ideas related to training. Highlight the following:
 1. Refer to helps at www.LifeWay.com/SundaySchool. Search on "Sunday School Index" for ideas or go to the "Helpful Links" and look for ideas.
 2. Refer to ideas in the *How to Sunday School Manual* by Wayne Poling.
 3. Consider training events: state convention events or associational events.
 4. Consider LifeWay events at Ridgecrest, Glorieta, and other locations, or online events.
 5. Design your own training—use David Francis' past books and this resource.
 6. Use the launch kit ideas.
- Set up a system of accountability. See page 34 for ideas. Review with the group.

STEP Five: Expect Classes to Reproduce

Ask each participant to blow up the balloon he received, to tie it, and write the name of an adult Sunday School member on the balloon, using a felt-tip marker. Ask for a volunteer to come to the front of the room. Explain to the person that he or she is now a teacher of an adult Sunday School class and the balloons represents members of his or her class. Explain that people are going to begin bringing balloons to you. You are to try to hold on to as many balloons as possible.

Ask participants from the group to begin bringing their balloons one at a time. As the volunteer begins to drop balloons, have this person enlist someone to help hold some of the balloons. Explain that the first leader has begun the process of starting a new class. Continue until the original volunteer has enlisted two or three other participants to help hold balloons. Explain that this is how an adult Sunday School class should define success. One leader gathers a group to teach; then as the group grows, that leader enlists another to help by organizing class leaders or by creating a new unit.

Explain that, according to Ed Stetzer, Director of LifeWay Research, there is only one continent in the world where Christianity is not growing—North America. *Why? Could it be that we are so "huddled together" in our Christian subculture that we've forgotten what our mission is?* Point out that, in Mark 2:6, there is one phrase that probably describes the situation then and now: "But some of the scribes were sitting there." It seems they weren't expecting anything; they were just "sitting there." *Could this be the case for Sunday School classes today? Have we become comfortable?*

Most adult classes will max out in about two years. Some signs that classes have quit thinking about new classes include:

- Nesting—they have claimed a room and started remodeling it.
- Protecting—they don't want you to know about people who might be potential leaders.
- Maintaining—the class leadership and class attendance has remained virtually the same for more than twelve months. (Slide 23)



Distribute the handout Expect Classes to Reproduce (Handout 6). Review the following steps to birth new classes (Slide 24):

1. Gather space data. Measure all available and potential space. Don't limit new classes by space. Get creative.
 - Adults/Students: 12-15 sq. ft.
 - Children: 35 sq. ft.
 - Preschool: 25 sq. ft.
2. Gather class data.
 - Consider attendance versus enrollment.
 - Are there gaps in age or affinity groups? Who else could you be reaching?
 - Consider how full a classroom is—the rule of thumb is 80% full equals 100% full.
3. Make sure each class is training additional leaders, especially teachers. Use an apprentice approach in which a potential teacher does more than substitute.
4. Personally enlist leaders and members to help start a new class.
5. Provide a list of prospects for the new class.
6. Involve current classes up front—praying, communicating, encouraging.
7. Announce the birth of a new class—celebrate new life! Lead the group to brainstorm ways in which they could celebrate the birth of a new class. Ideas could include birth announcements, class “baby” shower in which supplies and other resources were given to the new class, class birth certificate, etc.



Imagine a Family Tree

Imagine each class starting a family tree. What might that tree look like 10 years from now? How many new classes will that class have birthed? What about grandkid classes? How many of those might there be? It is estimated that there are about 400,000 classes in Southern Baptist Sunday Schools. About 60% are adult classes or 240,000. If just one in ten of those classes would commit itself to start four classes over the next ten years, that would result in almost 100,000 new classes by 2020. At an average attendance of just 10 people per class, that would mean 1,000,000 more adults attending Sunday School each week; plus, their children would be attending. But it starts one class at a time! (Francis, p. 45). (Slide 25)

STEP Six: Conclusion

David Francis asked these questions at the beginning of his book regarding what you expect God to do through Sunday School (Slide 26):

- Will you expect Him to send newcomers every week?
- Will you expect participants in your Sunday School to receive a fresh Word from Him each week through a consistently dynamic Bible study experience?
- Will you expect members to say “yes” to opportunities to serve in His kingdom?
- Will you expect your Sunday School classes to reproduce?

What are your expectations? Have they changed? As you consider what God could do, let's look back at the close of the story of the paralytic. In Mark 2:12, when the Bible study ended and the paralytic was healed, the people “were all astounded and gave glory to God, saying, ‘We have never seen anything like this!’” (Slide 27)

May this be the response in your Sunday School as you strive to develop a Great Expectations Sunday School!