**Conference Plans**

These conference plans were created for use with all Sunday School leaders in all age groupings.

The plans can be used as one three-hour conference with breaks or as three one-hour sessions.

The plans are presented following the order of the chapters in *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community*. You may choose to craft a conference using the plans in a different order: Perspectives/ Principles/Practices (in this order, the Principles and Practices are an answer to how the future can be attained), or Principles/Practices/Perspectives (this order begins with the what and moves to the how).

If you use the plans for three one-hour sessions, you may want to consider using the plans for a quarter, meeting with leaders one hour for three consecutive months.

**20 Practices Conference Plans (Chapter 1)**

Purpose: To challenge conferees to identify at least one practice they will incorporate into their Bible study group to make it more evangelistic and outward-focused.

Pre-Conference

* Review chapter 1 of *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community.*
* Make copies of the “20 Practices of Evangelistic, Outward-focused Groups” handout.
* Provide copies of *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community* (available at LifeWay.com/DavidFrancis).
* Arrange chairs in groups of three or four. Label two chairs “For Guests” and place them closest to the door of the room.
* Review the Practices PowerPoint presentation, adjusting slides as needed.
* Secure a marker board and/or large sheets of paper, and appropriate markers.

**Plan**

**Arrival**

* As conferees arrive, direct them to share with those sitting in their smaller circle about their salvation experience. Encourage them to include factors that led them to consider salvation, who influenced them and how, and what steps they took after their salvation.
* After most have arrived, call for volunteers to share with the rest of the group a story of one of the people sitting in their group. Identify stories that include references to a Bible study leader, teacher, or group. Ask: *What did that leader, teacher, or group do that contributed to your making a decision to follow Christ?*
* Explain that the focus of this conference is to identify common practices of evangelistic, outward-focused groups. Challenge the conferees to look for practices they need to consider incorporating into their class.

Examine

* On a marker board or large sheet of paper, write “evangelistic” and “outward-focused.” Designate half of the conferees as evangelistic and the other half as outward-focused. Direct members of each half to discuss how they would define a Bible study group characterized by their assigned designation. After allowing them a brief time to discuss, call for volunteers assigned “evangelistic” to share their descriptions. Record common themes shared on the marker board or large sheet of paper. Repeat for the half assigned “outward-focused.” Lead the group to identify similarities in the two terms. Ask: *Can you have one without the other? What happens to groups that are evangelistic but not outward-focused? To groups that are outward-focused but not evangelistic?* Emphasize the importance of Bible study groups being both evangelistic and outward-focused.
* Comment that in the book *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community*, David Francis, Allan Taylor, and Ken Braddy identify 20 practices found in groups that are evangelistic and outward-focused. Distribute copies of the handout “20 Practices of Evangelistic, Outward-focused Groups.” Assign half of the conferees the first 10 practices and the other half practices 11 through 20. Direct them to review their assigned practices and create a symbol that represents each practice. Refer them to Chapter 1 of *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community* to better understand each assigned practice. After allowing time for groups to work, read the first practice and allow one volunteer to share the symbol they created for that practice. Repeat until one volunteer has shared a symbol for each practice listed. Clarify as needed using information from *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community.*
* Call for conferees to review the list of 20 practices, looking for other practices they would add to the list. Invite them to share any additions with the rest of the conferees. Ask: *Of the practices listed, which ones do you think are the most neglected? What reasons might a person give for neglecting the practice you identified?* Explain that Francis, Taylor, and Braddy propose that evangelism is the most common action ignored by a Bible study group (see Principle 12, p. 23). Point to the responses given for the second question as potential reasons for why evangelism is so easily neglected. Challenge the group to make sure they take intentional actions to make sure evangelism is not ignored in their Bible study group.

Conclude

* Call attention to the two chairs with the “For Guests” signs attached. Explain that a simple thing that could be done would be to make sure you always have additional chairs near the door for guests. Direct conferees to review the list of 20 practices and identify one practice they need to incorporate into their Bible study group or to improve. Call for them to record actions they and their Bible study group will need to take to incorporate that practice. Encourage them to share with the other two or three people sitting in their circle the practice they identified and the actions they will need to take to incorporate that practice.
* Conclude by guiding the circles of three or four to pray for each other that God will help them incorporate the practice they identified.

**Principles Conference Plan (Chapter 2)**

Purpose: To challenge conferees to identify ways they can act on at least one principle based on the role they play in their Bible study group.

Pre-Conference

* Review chapter 2 of *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community.*
* Make copies of the “20 Principles Followed by Evangelistic, Outward-focused Groups“ handout.
* Provide copies of *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community* (available at LifeWay.com/DavidFrancis).
* Review the Principles PowerPoint presentation, adjusting slides as needed.
* Secure a marker board and/or large sheets of paper, and appropriate markers.

Plan

Arrival

* As conferees arrive, direct them to use their smartphones, tablets, and other electronic devices to read Matthew 28:18-20 in various translations. Challenge them to paraphrase the passage as if they were telling it to a 5-year old. After most have arrived, invite two or three volunteers to share how they would present this passage to a 5-year old. Affirm those who share, pointing out similarities between each presentation.

(Option: Recruit a kids leader to demonstrate how he or she would present Matthew 28:18-20 to a group of 5-year olds.)

* Explain that the focus of this conference is on the principles that provide the foundation for approaching evangelism and outreach through Sunday School.

Examine

* Call attention to the “20 Principles Followed by Evangelistic, Outward-focused Groups” handout. Explain that the principles listed are identified by the authors of *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community*. Lead the conferees to organize the list into four groupings: our church, our Sunday School, ourselves, and Jesus (potential groupings: our church – principle 2; our Sunday School – principles 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12; ourselves – principles 7, 10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19; Jesus – principles 13, 14, 20). Direct conferees to review the information in *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community* to gain a clearer understanding of each principle as they decide how to categorize each.

(Option: For larger groups, create smaller teams and direct each team to categorize the principles. Invite a volunteer to share his or her team’s categorization. Allow other teams to propose adjustments, leading to consensus by the conferees.)

* Emphasize the principles placed in the Jesus category. Ask: *How do these serve as the basis for all other principles listed?* Explain that everything done in the Christian church should start with Jesus.
* Emphasize the principles placed in the “ourselves” category. Invite volunteers to share ways in which they have seen the reality of these principles. Highlight principles 15 and 16, summarizing the content on these two principles found in *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community*. Help the group understand that every believer has a story to tell.
* Emphasize the principles placed in the “our Sunday School” category. Ask: *How do the principles in this category support the Jesus and ourselves principles?* Help the group understand that Sunday School is a means of accomplishing the tasks included in the “ourselves” category.
* Emphasize the principles placed in the “our church” category. Highlight principle 2. Lead the group to debate which comes first, an evangelistic church or an evangelistic Sunday School. Help the group understand that one cannot be easily developed without the other.
* Call attention to Article XI (11) of the Baptist Faith and Message:

Evangelism and Missions: It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ. (See sbc.net/bfm2000.)

* Invite conferees to review the statement. Offer any explanation of the statement as needed. Lead the group to identify the principles examined in this session with elements of the doctrinal statement. Highlight the second sentence in the statement (“The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others”). Remind conferees that our salvation should be seen in our love for others, both believers and unbelievers.

Conclude

* Direct conferees to select one principle that speaks to the role they play in their Sunday School. Ask: *How can you apply that principle to your role and group? What actions are required to carry out that identified principle in your role?*
* Remind the group of principle 17 (A catalyst usually keeps evangelism front and center). Challenge them to be that catalyst in their class. Close in prayer.

**Perspectives Teaching Plan (Chapter 3)**

Purpose: To challenge conferees to identify actions they will take in light of the future perspectives identified in *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community*.

Pre-Conference

* Review chapter 3 of *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community.*
* Prepare a mini-lecture on the beginning of Sunday School in America using information found in *Missionary Sunday School: One Missions, His Story, Every Person* by David Francis (available as a free download from LifeWay.com/DavidFrancis). (Option: Recruit someone to develop and present the mini-lecture.)
* Make copies of the “20 Perspectives Followed by Evangelistic, Outward-focused Groups” handout.
* Review the Perspectives PowerPoint presentation, adjusting slides as needed.
* Secure a marker board and/or large sheets of paper, and appropriate markers.

Plan

Arrival

* As conferees arrive, encourage them to share with another conferee milemarkers in their life that have shaped them into who they are today. After most have arrived, share with the group significant milemarkers from your life. Invite two or three volunteers to share as well.

(Option: If conference is conducted for one church, invite conferees to list milemarkers in the history of the church. Research the church’s history in preparation. Add to the list if necessary.)

* Explain that milemarkes can help us gain perspective on where we have been, where we are, and where we need to go.

Examine

* Using information from *Missionary Sunday School: One Missions, His Story, Every Person* by David Francis (available as a free download from LifeWay.com/DavidFrancis), present a mini-lecture identifying milestones in the formation of the Sunday School movement in America.
* Distribute copies of the “20 Perspectives Followed by Evangelistic, Outward-focused Groups” handout. Call attention to the perspectives listed under “The Past.” Use illustrations from the mini-lecture and additional research to support perspectives 1–3. Invite conferees to review the quotes on page 29 of *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community*. Call for volunteers to summarize each quote in one sentence. Emphasize the historical connection between Sunday School and evangelism.
* Guide the conferees to pair up and review the perspectives listed on the handout under “The Present.” Direct pairs to *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community* for additional insight. Lead them to evaluate their own Sunday School or class. Ask: *Are these statements an accurate portrayal of your Sunday School or Sunday School class? Give an example to support your response.* After allowing the pairs to discuss, invite volunteers to share their view as you read aloud each perspective under the present. Lead them to rank “The Present” perspectives from most reflective to least reflective of today’s state of Sunday School.
* State: *There is hope of a Sunday School that focuses on evangelism.* Call attention to the perspectives listed under “The Future” on the handout. Create four teams and assign two of the future perspectives to each team. Direct the teams to review the material in *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community* for their assigned perspectives. Call for the team to propose actions required for their assigned perspective statement to become a reality or ramifications of their assigned statement. Invite each team to share their assigned perspective and their proposed actions or ramifications. Record what is presented on a large sheet of paper.

Conclude

* Read the Conclusion of *Leader: Creating Commissioned Community* (p. 40), directing the conferees to look for ways the future perspectives are seen in the story. Remind the conferees of the actions listed in response to the future perspectives, highlighting actions seen in the Conclusion. Challenge conferees to record three of the actions listed by the group that they would be willing to take on.
* Close in prayer, thanking God for allowing them to look to the future and for strength to make a difference in the future.