

Missionary Sunday School Conference Plan for All Leaders Together

Prepared by:

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Purpose: To provide a two-hour teaching experience for General Officers and Small Church Sunday School leaders and members for the purpose of identifying and implementing a strategy for becoming a Missionary Sunday School.

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 General Officer Sunday School leaders and members in state or associational training events.

PREPARE:**Provide the following resources for use throughout the training:**

- Nametag for each participant (A nametag template is provided in the zip files for this *2012 Missionary Sunday School Emphasis Kit*.)
- Optional: LCD projector, computer, and screen
- All Leaders Together Handout 1: One Mission—My Mission
- All Leaders Together Handout 2: His Story—All the Bible for All of Life
- All Leaders Together Handout 3: Discovering Our Ministry Focus Group (front)
- All Leaders Together Handout 3b: Discovering Our Ministry Focus Group (back)
- Create LifeSpan folders for each conferee. Download Levels of Bible Learning and Levels of Biblical Skills at www.lifeway.com/n/Church-Strategy/Levels-of-Biblical-Learning and LifeSpan charts/explanations at www.lifeway.com/Article/Why-LifeSpan-can-make-a-difference-for-your-church.

Download the following materials:

- Provide one copy of *Missionary Sunday School* by David Francis for each participant. The book is available as a free download or you can purchase copies for \$1.50 each at www.lifeway.com/davidfrancis. The book can also be purchased at the Apple iStore.
- PowerPoint presentation: Missionary Sunday School—All Leaders Together.ppt

Prepare a display of the following resources:

- *Missionary Sunday School* and *Transformational Class* by David Francis
- Sample of LifeWay (age group) Sunday School resources

Prepare the room for learning:

- Arrange chairs around tables; place nametags on each table.
- Arrange for AV equipment (optional) if PowerPoint presentation is used.
- Reproduce the handouts and prepare LifeSpan folders.

PRESENT:

1. INTRODUCTION (10-15 min.)

[SLIDE 1]

Greet conferees as they arrive and offer a welcome: *We are glad that you have chosen to be a part of this study on Missionary Sunday School. Your presence here indicates that you have a heart for God's mission—to seek and save the lost. Since its inception, Sunday School has been used as one of the many tools that the Holy Spirit has used to reach men, women, boys, and girls with the gospel of Jesus Christ and then equip them to be missionaries for Christ.*

This is the second in a series of Sunday School books by David Francis. In the first book, Transformational Class, David attempted to suggest some answers to the following question:

What might a Sunday School class or small group look like if it demonstrated the seven elements found in Transformational Church.

[SLIDES 2-9]

In the book Missionary Sunday School, the focus will be just one of the elements: Missionary Mentality. The question to be answered is:

What might a Sunday School look like if it saw itself as a missionary enterprise: thinking and acting out of a missionary mindset?

[SLIDE 10]

Read this definition to the group:

Missionary Mentality—Transformational churches discern their contexts.

- Understanding the community
 - understand the cultural context surrounding the church; know who lives around them
- Evaluating the church
 - know they are called to care for the community; strive for everything they do to be in the language and culture of the people they are trying to reach.

Ask the participants the following questions:

1. How does your class or Sunday School organization reflect a missionary mentality?
2. What is your class or Sunday School organization doing to become a more effective missionary?

Give them two minutes to write down a response on the back of GO/Small Church Handout 1, letting them know that you will ask for their responses during the conclusion of the session.

2. ONE MISSION—TRANSFORMATION (20 min.)

[SLIDE 11]

Objective: Participants will give examples of how we each have a unique place in the history of the Sunday School movement

(10 minutes)

Use the comments below, coupled with your own knowledge of the book, to present an overview of chapter 1 of *Missionary Sunday School*. Encourage dialogue and questions throughout the presentation. Place special emphasis on Your Place in the History of Sunday School. (The presentation can be equally effective with or without the PowerPoint slides.) All Leaders Together Handout 1 provides an outline for the participants.

Sunday School began as a missionary movement designed to reach, teach, and minister to persons who were outside the church and far from God. In a missionary Sunday School, that's still the mission.

The Sunday School movement took root in England around 1780. A newspaper publisher, Robert Raikes, is generally credited with accelerating the movement when he established classes to teach child laborers to read and write on their only day off each week using the Bible as the primary textbook.

The movement gained momentum in Philadelphia. Led by influential bishop William White, The First Day Society of Philadelphia was organized in 1790. A number of other Sunday School "societies" were organized in the United States with goals of literacy education for the poorer classes using the Bible as a primary text.

Sunday School expanded its work well beyond merely teaching the poorer classes to read and write. Sunday School became an evangelical enterprise.

Most Sunday School missionaries raised their own support. They would go from farm to farm or house to house talking to families about Sunday School, with the goal of persuading the families to organize a Sunday School.

Motorcycle Sunday School Mission operates in the African bush today with similar goals. Sidewalk Sunday Schools operate with a similar strategy, taking Sunday School to the kids of inner cities in America and around the world.

Stephen Paxson was America's most famous Sunday School missionary. He once organized over 40 schools in a period of 40 days!

Sunday School missionaries used Sunday School papers as important tools in their work and carried catalogs that offered books published and/or distributed by the Sunday School unions.

In our church, state, or denomination, who is known as a "Sunday School Man" (or woman!)?

Emphasize: *You are a part of a movement that has been a mighty tool for transformation in churches, counties, countries, and continents. It is a movement that not only has a remarkable history but also a bright future.*

When Sunday School is done right—with excellence and with a missionary purpose—it continues to be a proven and effective way of reaching the lost in our communities, involving the saved in service, and mobilizing the local church for ministry. Sunday School (people meeting in a small group for structured Bible study before or after a worship experience) works and works well...if the leaders are willing to do the work. It is not easy, but nothing worth doing ever is.

The Sunday School story is a missionary story. There are two major streams in that story, the church school and the missionary school. The first focuses primarily on people already connected with the church. Where it is practiced best, it consists of classes that are open groups; that is, they expect new people every week and create systems of outreach, ministry, and Bible Study to that end. The second stream, on the other hand, is comprised mostly of people—typically kids—who rarely or never attend church. In the 19th century America, mission Sunday Schools were started on behalf of the children and classes for adults—most typically the parents—often followed. But adult groups never were first or primary.

The missionary ministry of Sunday School has transformed millions of individuals spiritually. And churches have been transformed by the missionary ministry of Sunday School, but perhaps the most amazing aspect of the history of the Sunday School movement has been its remarkable impact in terms of cultural transformation, especially in America.

Your Sunday School (or its functional equivalent) is part of a movement with a great missionary heritage. Being a missionary Sunday School does not require a radical new direction as much as it requires a radical reconnection. To a movement ignited by a missionary mentality. To a movement fueled by a transformational textbook: the Bible. Exploring *His Story*, the story of redemption captured in the Word of God, is the primary vehicle by which Sunday School's *One Mission* is accomplished. It is a Book no one completely masters this side of heaven. The Bible is worthy of study throughout the span of life: from birth to heaven! A missionary Sunday School therefore operates with this maxim: *all the Bible for all of life*.

(10 minutes)

Ask participants to react to what they have just heard you present.

- Were you aware of the rich history that you are a part of?
- Were you aware of the fact that Sunday School preceded churches as Christianity moved from the early U.S. colonies to the Midwest and the open frontier?
- How do you see your current and future roles as Sunday School men and women in light of this history?
- What would it take for you to have the passion of many of the first Sunday School missionaries?
- What have you done in the past three months that declares you are a missionary?

As you close this section, challenge conferees to make some personal goal on how to carry the missionary baton for future Sunday School leaders as those that have come before have carried them for us.

3. HIS STORY—ALL THE BIBLE FOR ALL OF LIFE (45 min.)

Objective: Participants will list ways their Sunday Schools can be more systematic and provide open groups that are transformational.

[SLIDE 12]

Provide a summary of the following information:

Missionaries have known for centuries that they must have a deep understanding of their host culture before planning a strategy to reach the unique people group that exists in that

cultural context. This is why they first study the culture to find strategies that will work among the people who live in that cultural setting. Missions history is filled with stories of great revivals because missionaries were able to understand how to speak into those cultures and the church exploded in their communities.

Many church leaders do not see their communities as a mission field. This may explain the way many church leaders distinguish evangelism from missions: evangelism takes place near us and missions take place overseas. Some churches are "far-thinking" and "far-reaching" about international missions but fail to reach the people in the shadow of their own steeple or inside the walls of the church. This is because North America is often not seen as a mission field, or it is seen as a "reached" field only in need of an evangelism strategy.

Evangelism is telling people about Jesus. Missions involves understanding them before we tell them. No matter what you believe about the North American context—largely reached or unreached, religious hotbed or mission field, pagan or Christian—we can all agree that large segments of people in our society have not been reached. Many aspects of our culture have yet to be influenced with the gospel. Applying missionary principles in the North American context means that we seek to understand the cultural situation and its people as we seek to reach them with the gospel. That will allow all of us to be more effective as we join God in making more and better followers of Jesus Christ.

Today, we need to function as international missionaries have for centuries. Why? Because Scripture and history teach us that the church and the Sunday School are missionary in nature. If we are going to join God on His mission, we have to recognize that we are missionaries...wherever He places us—just like the first disciples.

God's story of salvation through Jesus Christ is the message carried by those sent by the Father as His missionaries. It is the Gospel alone through the power of the Holy Spirit that awakens the hearts of men, women, boys, and girls toward God. In a missionary Sunday school class, the purpose of Bible study is to equip members to be missionaries!

Ask: How would your church's Bible study (Sunday School) be different if you thought of it as missionary training?

[SLIDE 13]

Some things might not be different at all, but instead of learning for the sake of learning, a class of missionaries learns for the purpose of being equipped—not just to understand His Story, but also to share His Story in work and deed. It is about learning to live it.

Perhaps the most important skill required for reaching people effectively is the ability to communicate in the language of the people being reached. In Sunday School that means understanding how people learn based on their physical maturity and dominate style of learning.

Distribute LifeSpan folders and All Leaders Together Handout 2.

Use the information in the LifeSpan folder and the *Levels of Biblical Learning* poster to explain the progression of comprehending biblical concepts. Explain how the foundational principles change from simple to complex (kids, students, and adults). Point out that LifeWay's ongoing Bible study resources follow this pattern to help leaders speak in the language of those age groups. Highlight the 15 Biblical Concepts as representing the whole counsel of God for life.

Comment: *We need a plan for study that somehow helps lead learners look at the whole counsel*

of God's Word. That plan needs to be realistic and fair. You can create your own plan or use one of the plans created by an organization like LifeWay. But regardless of the plan you choose, be sure it takes into account the whole counsel of God's Word in a realistic and fair timeframe. Once you select the plan, stick with it.

[SLIDES 14-36]

Review the definitions of Open Group and Advanced Training from Handout 2 and lead in a discussion of these concepts.

One by one, review and debrief the next four questions on Handout 2.

4. EVERY PERSON—THE MISSIONARY PRINCIPLE OF THE PEOPLE GROUP (20 min.)

Objective: Participants will be able to choose the tool(s) necessary to discover their ministry focus group.

Distribute All Leaders Together Handout 3 and 3b (printed on front and back of one page).

[SLIDES 37-40]

Comment: The missionary Sunday School is satisfied only when everyone within its reach has access to a Bible study group appropriate for his or her age, stage of life, and ability to learn. Until that happens, there is always more work to do. There are many challenges and obstacles to make this happen, but God's plan always prevail. With much prayer, a willingness to be used by God as His ambassadors, and preparation we can watch God do wonderful thing through your Sunday School.

Lead the participants through the steps on Handout 3-3b to help them determine possible people groups to whom they might minister.

Context

As a missionary Sunday School we refer to context as it relates to issues of the people group, (Rural 1st and 2nd graders; vs. teenage urban boys), their culture, values, and lifestyle. Often in international missions, we recognize the diversity of contexts. In North America we must begin to deal with the differences in contexts.

Contextualization

As a missionary Sunday School, contextualization refers to developing and/or adapting a strategy determined by the specific context (area and people). In other words, the way we approach Bible study is impacted by the context—the place where you minister and the people you are seeking to reach. The apostle Paul contextualized his approach to presenting the gospel wherever he went. His whole approach can be summed up in 1 Corinthians 9:22, “To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some.”

Comment: With that in mind, begin to think about the people group God might be directing you to reach as a Sunday School missionary.

Remind conferees that it's important to define your contextual environment and ministry focus group in terms of spiritual conditions. A saved person is one who has a personal relationship

with God through faith in Jesus Christ. A church person is one who has a meaningful relationship with a local church and participates on a regular basis.

Ask: Which of these four possible groups do you sense God calling your Sunday School to reach?

Comment that it could be more than one group. Explain that in developing strategies to reach people, it is important to develop a profile of your ministry focus group in terms of barriers. Missionary Sunday schools work at lowering the barriers while raising the standard of the gospel. There are a number of different barriers that will need to be identified and addressed. Share some of these comments as conferees work on Handout 3:

Image barriers

Unfortunately, the church today often has a credibility problem. It is important to gain an understanding of how the church is viewed within a given contextual environment or ministry focus group.

Language barriers

Good communication is often the key to being relevant. The gospel never changes, but to penetrate a given area, people must be introduced to the gospel in a language they can understand.

Cultural barriers

There are certain cultural issues that we bring into a community with us. We must be quick to identify these and make sure that we are not trying to impose religious or regional cultures on our ministry focus group.

Religious barriers

What religious baggage do the people carry around with them? Often, due to past issues in a given community, there are specific religious barriers that have to be addressed.

Ask: Based on your findings, what are the implications of these issues?

Comment: One preacher put it this way, "Find a hurt and heal it and find a need and meet it." There are at least three types of needs that should be addressed in considering the profile of your ministry focus group. There are many ways to categorize needs.

Real needs

What are the obvious issues that have created real needs? These needs may be physical (survival needs). The needs could be social, emotional (self-actualizing needs), or spiritual needs.

Felt needs

Real and felt needs are not in conflict with one another. What are perceived or recognized needs? There may be some real needs that people do not recognize or feel.

Anticipated needs

Due to the changes in communities, new needs develop. What needs are being created by changes in households, families, economy, schools, networks?

Ask: Based on your findings, what are the implications of these issues?

Direct conferees to consider the demographic questions on Handout 3-3b and record responses.

Lead participants to discuss their responses to the final four questions on Handout 3-3b.

5. CONCLUSION (10 min.)

Ask the following questions and debrief them as time permits.

1. What roadblocks does your class or church face when it comes to having a group for everyone in your community? What actions can you take to help remove those roadblocks?

2. What would God need to do so your class could establish a new group for a UPG in your community?

3. What would God need to do to make your class a center for sending missionaries to other groups (preschool, children, student, and other adult groups)?

Summarize Concluding Challenges (pp. 40-41).

Close in prayer.