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**Adult Conference Plans**

**Purpose:** This conference plan details a conference experience for adult Sunday School and small-group leaders. The goal is to provide an overview of the book *Saddle Up* and to apply its content to the Bible study setting of conference participants.

The plans can be used as one 2.5 hour session (with a break) or as three 45-minute sessions (one 45-minute session for each chapter). If you choose three 45-minute sessions, you may lead the sessions over 3 consecutive weeks or use the plans during quarterly leadership meetings, with one session each for three consecutive months.

There is more content than can be covered in each 45-minute session. Consider the steps and procedures that would be most beneficial to your group. Pick and choose the sections you wish to focus on, directing the participants to read all of *Saddle Up* to gain more insight.

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**General Preparation**

* Read *Saddle Up: Leading Your Groups with Purpose, Posture, & Preparedness* by Ken Braddy, Michael Kelley, and Dwayne McCrary

**Collect the following resources for use during the training experience**

* One copy of *Saddle Up: Leading Your Groups with Purpose, Posture, & Preparedness* by Ken Braddy, Michael Kelley, and Dwayne McCrary for each participant. The book can be ordered at *LifeWay.com/TrainingResources* or you can download a free PDF version as well.
* Nametags for each participant. Markers for participants to write their names.
* Table for participants to complete a name tag.
* Bible
* 3x5 cards
* Printer paper or card stock for assignment items.
* Print Items 1-6.
* Painter’s Tape or Mavalus® tape for attaching placards to walls.
* Post-It® notepad (wall size) and appropriate markers.
* Marker board and dry-erase markers and an eraser.
* Monitor or Data projector and a screen or light color wall for PowerPoint image.
* PowerPoint® presentation for *Saddle Up* adult conference, available free from *LifeWay.com/TrainingResources*.
* Optional: Speaker and music source such as a CD or music from your phone.

**Conference Segment 1: Our Purpose**

**Prepare**

* Review chapter 1 of *Saddle Up: Leading Your Groups with Purpose, Posture, & Preparedness.*
* Arrange chairs in groups of 3-4 facing the monitor or focal wall with PowerPoint® presentation.
* Place one copy of *Saddle Up: Leading Your Groups with Purpose, Posture, & Preparedness* in each chair.
* Review the “Our Purpose” PowerPoint® presentation, adjusting slides as needed.
* Print and cut these three statements (Item 1).

Group 1: How might the image of the head be used to evaluate the growth of a disciple?

Group 2: How might the image of the heart be used to evaluate the growth of a disciple?

Group 3: How might the image of hands be used to evaluate the growth of a disciple?

* Print and cut “Sequoia Tree Fun Facts.” (Item 2) Or, record each of these facts about sequoia trees on a separate 3x5 card.
  + Sequoia trees can grow to be 300 feet tall.
  + Sequoia trees can live to be 1,500-2,000 years old.
  + Sequoia trees root system is only 4-5 feet deep.
  + Sequoia trees intertwine their root system with the trees next to them.
  + Sequoia trees don’t grow alone. They always grow in groves or rows.
* Place a bookmark or blank 3x5 card in a Bible at 2 Timothy 2:1-2.
* Print and cut the following statements (Item 3) or write on 3x5 cards, one statement per card.
  + How are these six principles tied to this implication of foundational discipleship: Foundational discipleship means we resist the urge to always “go deeper.”
  + How are these six principles tied to this implication of foundational discipleship: Foundational discipleship means we choose trustworthy ongoing curriculum.
  + How are these six principles tied to this implication of foundational discipleship: Foundational discipleship means we keep the attention of our groups focused outwardly.
* Place a marker board or Post-It® notepad (wall size) sheets on the wall next to the presentation image.
* Place a table with nametags and markers near the room entrance door.
* Optional: Speaker/music source with upbeat Christian music playing while participants arrive.

**Plan**

**Arrival/Introduction**

* As participants arrive direct them to the table to complete a nametag.

**The “Why” of Sunday School: Make Disciples**

* Direct participants to respond to these questions in groups of 3-4:
  + *Why does your church exist? What is its purpose?*
  + *Why does your Sunday School exist? What is its purpose?*

Allow 3-4 minutes for discussion, then debrief by allowing 2-3 groups share their responses with the larger group. Supplement responses as needed.

* Remind leaders that it is important to be able to clearly articulate why we as a church do what we do. State: The purpose of your church is to make disciples. The purpose of your Sunday School is to make disciples, because your Sunday School is your church in microcosm. Your Sunday School is your church organized to achieve the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).
* Direct the group to the Robby Gallaty quote on page 12. Ask a volunteer to read the quote to the group as participants read along in their books.

**Inherent in Making Disciples is Change**

* Direct participants to discuss in groups of 3-4: *What is a disciple? What does a growing disciple look like?*
* Present a mini-lecture on the three changes that take place in disciples, based on material from Jim Putman and Bobby Harrington’s book, *DiscipleShift* (page 13).
* Ask participants to stand and form three separate groups to discuss an assigned question. Each of the groups should be comprised of approximately 1/3 of the total number of participants. Provide each group with one of the placards (Item 1).
  + Group 1: How might the image of the head be used to evaluate the growth of a disciple?
  + Group 2: How might the image of the heart be used to evaluate the growth of a disciple?
  + Group 3: How might the image of hands be used to evaluate the growth of a disciple?

Debrief by allowing each group to summarize their discussion, supplementing with your comments as needed.

* Following discussion and debrief, allow participants to return to their original group of 3-4.

**Sunday School is Foundational Discipleship**

* Using the analogy of the importance of a strong foundation for a house or building, summarize the third paragraph on page 14, beginning with, “When it comes to Sunday School, we must understand that it is foundational discipleship….”

**Implications of Foundational Discipleship**

* Ask: *If Sunday School is foundational discipleship, what are the implications for us? How might we go about making sure that Sunday School is doing its job of laying a good, solid foundation in disciples’ hearts and lives?* (page 14)
* Present a mini-lecture on the three implications of foundational discipleship (page 15).
* Direct participants to the question at the top of page 16. *How do you see the three implications for foundational discipleship playing out in your class?* Ask participants to record their response in the space provided on page 16. Allow time for personal reflection and recording response. Option: Following time of personal reflection, direct participants to discuss their responses with others in their small group of 3-4.

**Making Disciples Means Openly Enrolling Them**

* Summarize content from page 16. Ken Braddy writes, *In order to make disciples, it helps to enroll people in our Bible study groups...Enrolling people in Bible study means we must change the conversation when a guest comes to our Bible study session.*
* Share with the group Braddy’s method of asking guests to enroll in his Bible study group.

**Open Enrollment and Open Groups**

* State: Sunday School groups function best as open groups. In fact, Sunday School groups are designed to be open groups (page 17). Ask: *So, what is an open group? What are elements of an open group?* Record responses on a white board or large notepad (wall size) sheets. Fill in responses not mentioned from the bullet list found on page 17.
* Ask: *What is the relationship between open groups and open enrollment? How do they support each other? Can you have one without the other?* (page 17) Option: Guide participants to respond to the questions in their small groups of 3-4. Allow time to discuss in small groups, then debrief as a large group.

**Principles for Making Disciples**

* Present a mini-lecture with discussion on the six principles for making disciples (pages 18-20).

1. **Disciples are made in smaller groups.**

Brainstorm with participants why discipleship might happen best in smaller groups. Record responses on the white board or large notepad (wall size) sheets.

Ask: *What is the ideal size for a disciple making group?* Allow small groups of 3-4 to briefly discuss and determine a number. Invite each small group to call out their response. Share information from David Francis’ book, *Countdown*, in which he states that the optimal size for a Bible study group is 12, plus or minus 4. Ask: *How does that compare to the size of your Bible study group? Other groups in your Sunday School ministry?*

1. **Making disciples requires proximity.**

To emphasize the need to live in close proximity to other disciples for the purpose of maturing in our relationship with Christ, explain the secrets of the Sequoia tree. Randomly distribute “Sequoia Tree Fun Facts” cards to volunteers (Item 2). Ask each volunteer to read their “Sequoia Tree Fun Fact” to the group.

Say: “The secret of these massive trees is that although their root systems are only 4-5 feet deep, they intertwine with the trees next to them. This allows them to stand tall when winds and storms threaten them. Similar, people in our churches need relationships with other believers. It is important that our Sunday School ministry be comprised of small groups.”

1. **Growing disciples read God’s Word daily.**

State: In a research project done for the book, *The Shape of Faith to Come*, Brad Waggoner discovered that growing disciples place themselves in a posture to grow spiritually year-over-year by several key habits. The #1 factor was daily Bible reading! (page 19)

Ask: *How can you encourage members of your Bible study group to read the Bible daily?* Record responses on a white board or large notepad (wall size) sheets.

1. **Disciples replicate themselves.**

Ask for a volunteer to read 2 Timothy 2:1-2. Summarize the content from page 19 for the group.

Ask: *Why is multiplication better than addition when it comes to making disciples?* State: You will ultimately reach more people if disciples replicate themselves and make more disciples who can repeat the discipleship process.

1. **Disciples have preference for Bible study.**

Poll participants by asking them through a show of hands who likes their steak:

* + Rare
  + Medium
  + Well Done

Explain that some people want their steaks rare while others believe the right kind of steak has a thin strip of pink down the middle (medium). There are others who only want their steak cooked thoroughly.

Just as people have preferences for the way they desire their steak cooked, disciples have preferences for the way in which they study the Bible. One size may not fit all, so it’s good to have options when it comes to Bible study.

1. **Disciples benefit from greater accountability.**

State: It is extremely difficult to develop disciples solely through your church’s weekend worship service and participation in a Bible study group.

Ask: *What is another step we can encourage our group members to engage?*

Growing disciples benefit from accountability groups or D-Groups (page 20). Explain the nature of these groups and the benefit of participation.

* Create three groups. Provide each group a placard (Item 3) or 3x5 card with one of the following statements. (Note: The implications of foundational discipleship are found on page 15.) Allow time for group discussion, then debrief.

1. How are these six principles tied to this implication of foundational discipleship: Foundational discipleship means we resist the urge to always “go deeper.”
2. How are these six principles tied to this implication of foundational discipleship: Foundational discipleship means we choose trustworthy ongoing curriculum.
3. How are these six principles tied to this implication of foundational discipleship: Foundational discipleship means we keep the attention of our groups focused outwardly.

* Ask: *What barriers might get in the way of these principles being carried out? How can you and I combat these barriers?*

**Making Disciples is Fueled by Silence**

* After participants return to their small group of 3-4, share the importance of allowing each person in a Bible study group to talk.
* Ask: *How does group silence work against the six principles for disciple making?*

**Disciples or Degrees**

* Diagnostic questions are helpful to determine if we, as adult Sunday School leaders, are making disciples or just producing people with more biblical knowledge. Present the three diagnostic questions and add context as necessary (pages 22-23):

1. Are my bible studies knowledge-focused or application-focused?
2. Is the goal to “get through” a lesson or to allow for Spirit-led meandering?
3. Are there visible signs of people becoming more mature followers of Christ?

* Direct participants to discuss in small groups of 3-4 the following questions related to these diagnostic questions:
  + *How might these three questions be used to evaluate a Sunday School Class?*
  + *How might the response differ based on who does the evaluation (the leader, the group, a guest, etc.)?*

**Summary**

* Conclude by reminding participants that adult Sunday School Classes exist for the purpose of making disciples. Everything done by the group should be a reflection of making disciples.
* Close with a time of prayer. Ask participants to pray for others in their small group that they would be focused on making disciples through their class.

If this is a continuation conference, with the entire book to be taught in one 2-3 hour session, take a 15-minute break at this time.

**Conference Segment 2: Our Posture**

**Pre-Conference**

* Review chapter 2 of *Saddle Up: Leading Your Groups with Purpose, Posture, & Preparedness.*
* Arrange chairs in groups of 3-4 facing the monitor or focal wall with PowerPoint® presentation.
* Secure extra copies of *Saddle Up: Leading Your Groups with Purpose, Posture, & Preparedness* for participants who have not received one.
* Place a bookmark or blank 3x5 card in a Bible at John 15:5.
* Review the “Our Posture” PowerPoint® presentation, adjusting slides as needed.
* Place a marker board or Post-It® notepad (wall size) sheets on the wall next to the presentation image.
* Print and cut two placards (Item 4).
  + What should members expect from me as a teacher?
  + What should the teacher expect from the members?
* Place two Post-It® notepad (wall size) sheets on two separate walls of the room, one per wall. Place a marker on the floor beneath the sheet or tape the marker on the wall next to the sheet. Tape one of the placards (previous item) over each wall size sheet of paper.
* Place a table with nametags and markers near the room entrance door.
* Optional: Speaker/music source with upbeat Christian music playing while participants arrive.

**Plan**

**Arrival/Introduction**

* As participants arrive, direct them to the table to complete a nametag.
* Say: “In the previous session we discussed that our Sunday School exists for the purpose of making disciples. Everything done by our adult Sunday School Class should reflect the purpose of making disciples.

In this session we will explore how we as adult teachers put ourselves in a position to carry out this purpose. We’ll discover that our posture really does matter when it comes to making disciples.”

**The Abiding Posture of a Leader**

* Ask a volunteer to read John 15:5. Ask: *What is the position or posture of a leader we see in this verse?* (“Abide” or “Remains.”) Say: “Abiding in Christ is the basic work of the Christian life.”
* Summarize for participants the contents of pages 27-30.
* Direct participants to discuss these questions in small groups of 3-4:
  + *What are the dangers of trying to carry out the mission of Jesus on our own?*
  + *What intentional choices have you made that put you in a better position to encounter Jesus more regularly?*

**The Kneeling Posture of a Leader**

* Say: “The second posture a leader must take is kneeling. This is the posture of prayer. When we pray we are acknowledging our own weakness and recognizing God’s strength.” (page 31)
* Present a mini-lecture on the three simple ways to develop the discipline of prayer (page 31-32).
  + Pray regularly
  + Pray specifically
  + Pray collectively
* Direct participants to discuss in small groups of 3-4:
  + *Which of these three prayer actions is easiest to maintain? Explain.*
  + *Which requires the most work?*

**The Servant Posture of a Leader**

* Invite participant to join one of two teams. Each team should gather at one of the wall size sheets placed on opposite sides of the room with a placard (Item 4) indicating the question to be discussed. Team members select an individual from their team to record responses on the wall size sheet. Team members call out their responses to the statement while one member records on the sheet. Allow time for discussion, and then allow each group to report. Add comments as necessary.
  + What should members expect from me as a teacher?
  + What should the teacher expect from the members?
* Say: “As a leader we must have a posture of abiding and we must have a posture of kneeling in prayer. In addition, third, we must also show a posture of service. Our model in this is Jesus.”
* Present a mini-lecture on the three characteristics of Christian service (pages 34-38).
  + Our service must be humble.
  + Our service must be sacrificial.
  + Our service must be unbiased.
* Ask participants to discuss in small groups of 3-4:
  + *What is the relationship between humility and service?*
  + *How do they work together in the life of a believer?*

**Summary**

* Remind participants that as leaders we must be careful of our posture. We must take active steps to make sure our posture is one of abiding, kneeling, and service. Out of that posture we can focus on the basics of leading our Bible study groups.
* Close by asking individuals in the small groups of 3-4 to kneel (if they are physically able) and pray for others in their groups.

If this is a continuation conference, with the entire book to be taught in one 2-3 hour session, take a 10-15-minute break at this time.

**Conference Segment 3: Our Preparedness**

**Pre-Conference**

* Review chapter 3 of *Saddle Up: Leading Your Groups with Purpose, Posture, & Preparedness.*
* Arrange chairs in groups of 3-4 facing the monitor or focal wall with PowerPoint® presentation.
* Secure extra copies of *Saddle Up: Leading Your Groups with Purpose, Posture, & Preparedness* for participants who have not received one.
* Review the “Our Preparedness” PowerPoint® presentation, adjusting slides as needed.
* Place a marker board or Post-It® notepad (wall size) sheets on the wall next to the presentation image.
* Print five placards (Items 5a-5e).
  + What will we study this week?
  + What does the selected passage mean then and now?
  + What is the main point we need to focus on?
  + How might this truth change the way we think, believe, act, and relate?
  + How can I help my group discover these truths for themselves?
* Print out sufficient copies of the handout, “How Do I Find and Develop Apprentices?” (Item 6)
* Place a bookmark or blank 3x5 card in a Bible at Hebrews 13:7.
* Place a table with nametags and markers near the room entrance door.
* Optional: Speaker/music source with upbeat Christian music playing while participants arrive.

**Plan**

**Arrival / Introduction**

* As participants arrive direct them to the table to complete a nametag.
* Say: “We have discussed our purpose (to make disciples), and our posture (abiding, kneeling, and service). However, as adult teachers and leaders we can know these and still come up short in making disciples by failing to prepare to lead our groups.” (p. 38)

**Preparing to Lead Our Groups**

* Say: “The members of our adult Sunday School Class expect us to be prepared to lead them in a study of the assigned Scripture passage. Our objective should be to get the members of our group into the Word of God (Scripture) so that the Word of God (Scripture) gets into them.

Every week, we must answer five questions. Our answers should be covered with prayer. Failing to pray when answering these questions will lead us away from our purpose.

* Direct participants to place the five questions in proper order (Items 5a-5e). To do so, distribute five placards to volunteers. Mix up the placards and don’t hand them out in proper order. Ask volunteers to stand in front of the larger group, holding their placard in front of them. Invite participants to call out to the volunteers to move left or right of other volunteers until the placards are in correct order. The correct order of the placards is:
  + What will we study this week?
  + What does the selected passage mean then and now?
  + What is the main point we need to focus on?
  + How might this truth change the way we think, believe, act, and relate?
  + How can I help my group discover these truths for themselves?
* While the volunteers remain at the front of the room with the questions in order, ask: *What happens if we don’t get these questions in order?* (It will short-circuit our preparation.)
* Thank the volunteers for their work and take the placards from them as they return to their seats.
* Present a mini-lecture on the five questions (pages 40-45). As you address each question, tape the placard with that question onto the focal wall. At the end of the mini-lecture, all five questions should be in correct order on the focal wall.
* As you conclude the mini-lecture on Question 5 (How can I help the group discover these truths for themselves?), say, “It’s important that you and I put together a teaching plan that goes beyond simply telling our members what the passage mean.”
* Summarize for the participants five ways to help our members discover biblical truth for themselves.
  1. Create a discovery activity around the big idea.
  2. Craft questions that move the group into the discovery activity and help them respond to the truth discovered.
  3. Identify what the group will need to know to complete the discovery activity and respond to the questions leading up to and in response to the discovery activity.
  4. Add an introduction and conclusion to the group plans.
  5. List the things needed to make the plan happen and start gathering them.
* Direct participants to discuss the following two questions in small groups of 3-4. Debrief with 2-3 small groups sharing their discussion.
  + *How can you use these steps to prepare a group plan for your class?*
  + *What other steps might you add?*
* Remind the group that we do more during a Sunday School session than lead the Bible study. Most groups have a time of fellowship, announcements, and of sharing prayer requests and praying together.

Instruct participants in their small groups of 3-4 to determine how much time should be allocated to each weekly class activities, based on a one hour Sunday School Class schedule. Activities that might be included in the schedule could include:

* + Fellowship Time
  + Announcements
  + Receiving prayer requests
  + Prayer
  + Bible study
  + Allowing ministry teams to report on needs of class members
  + Assignment of prospects to members to contact
  + Other activities participants must consider in their church context

Ask each small group of 3-4 to gather with another small group and share their schedule. Debrief the entire group of participants by asking:

* + *What might you need to change so you can better manage the group time?*
  + *How might you go about making those changes?*

**Preparing Our Groups to Serve**

* Read or summarize for the group the first two paragraphs on page 48.
* Ask: *What roles or actions are needed in or by our Sunday School class that move us to accomplish our mission of making disciples?* Record responses on a white board or large wall size sheets. Supplement with roles/actions identified on page 49.
* Ask: *What actions are you taking to foster a culture of service in your group?* Allow time for several participants to respond.
* Say: “One indicator of a healthy class is that it starts other new healthy classes and/or sends members out to start new classes or teach in other areas of the Sunday School. In order for adult classes to be poised to start new classes or for you to leave your class to start a new class, it is imperative that each teacher train and equip an apprentice.”
* Distribute the handout, *How Do I Find and Develop Apprentices* (Item 6) to each participant. Review the five areas and highlight key sentences or statements on the document.
* Ask: *What else do you need to do to equip or prepare an apprentice? Is anything missing?*

**Preparing Our Groups to Start New Groups**

* Remind participants that discipleship happens best in the context of relationships and relationships happen best in the context of small groups. The more people we reach, teach, and minister to, the more people we should have discipled to the point they leave our group to start another adult Sunday School Class or teach in another age group in our church’s Sunday School ministry.
* Ask: *Who in your class needs to step up by serving as your apprentice?* Allow participants time to reflect silently.
* In small groups of 3-4 challenge participants to consider:
  + *What groups in our community are we not currently reaching as a church?*
  + *What steps can you take to help start a new group to reach at least one of these unreached groups?*

**Summary**

* Read Hebrews 13:7. Summarize the final two paragraphs on page 56.

*The writer of Hebrews called on his readers to remember the leaders who spoke God’s Word to them, to carefully observe the outcome of their lives, and to imitate their faith (Hebrews 13:7). The leaders listed challenge us to remember their lives, to consider the investment they made in us, and to invest in another generation of disciples. Their lives call all of us to saddle up and get busy making disciples.* (page 56)

* Close in prayer asking God to bless each participant as he or she leads with purpose, posture, and preparedness.