

**Transformational Class:
Transformational Church Goes to Sunday School
Teaching Plan for Preschool Leaders**

Prepared by:

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Purpose: To provide a two-hour teaching experience for preschool Sunday School leaders for the purpose of identifying and implementing a strategy for becoming a Transformational Sunday School class.

How to use this plan

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

PREPARATION

Provide the following resources for use throughout the training:

- Nametag for each participant. (A nametag template is provided on the CD-Rom in the *Sunday School Emphasis Kit*.)
- Hand mirror
- Binoculars (You can use two cardboard tubes taped together.)
- 10 pieces of 5-by-7-inch heavy paper. Print one of the following Leadership Characteristics on each paper:
 - enlists new teachers
 - tends to gossip
 - is critical
 - is encouraging
 - shares vision
 - is lazy
 - desires to start new units
 - refuses to start new units
 - is domineering and forceful
 - builds relationships with teachers
- Masking tape
- 9 index cards
- 1 sticky note per conferee
- 3 old folded maps or 3 pages torn from an atlas
- Preschool Handout 1: Group Assignments 1. Print and cut at dotted lines. Place each assignment in a designated corner with poster board and a marker.
- Preschool Handout 2: Group Assignments 2. Print and cut at dotted lines.

- Preschool Handout 3: Prayer Puzzle. Print 3 copies. Cut each copy into 12 puzzle pieces, place in an envelope and mark Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3.
- Preschool Handout 4: Transformational Loop (one copy for each conferee)
- Preschool Handout 5: Vibrant Leadership (one copy for each conferee)

Download the following materials:

- Provide one copy of *Transformational Class: Transformational Church Goes to Sunday School* 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 \$1.50 each at www.LifeWay.com/SundaySchool.
- PowerPoint presentation: Transformational Class: Transformational Church Goes to Sunday School—Preschool.ppt

Prepare a display of the following resources:

- *Transformational Class: Transformational Church Goes to Sunday School* by David Francis
- Sample of LifeWay Preschool Sunday School resources
- Holman Read to Me Bible

Prepare the room for learning:

- Arrange chairs in rows of semi circles facing the front of the room.
- Arrange for AV equipment for PowerPoint® presentation.
- Reproduce handouts and place in chairs.
- Place a nametag on top of the handouts and provide markers.
- Have [Slide 1] from the PowerPoint® presentation on the screen as participants enter the room.

PROCEDURES:

1. INTRODUCTION (15 min.)

Welcome conferees and introduce yourself. Share your excitement about the material and how it could be the beginning of great things for them and their churches.

Ask conferees to stand and find two new friends to form groups of three. Guide each group of three people to:

- stand in alphabetical order according to their first name
- stand from shortest to tallest
- stand in a line according to their birthday (January 1 would be first, etc.)

- stand in a line according to the number of siblings they have (fewest to greatest)
- stand in alphabetical order according to their mom's maiden name
- stand in a line according to how many pets they have (fewest to greatest)

Congratulate the groups for organizing themselves appropriately. Share how the activity easily works because they had three people. Explain how today's conference will highlight three exciting categories found in the book *Transformational Class: Transformational Church Goes to Sunday School*.

Ask each group member to number off as a 1, 2, or 3. Ask the 1s to move to one corner of the room. Ask the 2s to move to a second corner, and the 3s to move to a third corner. Direct each group to use the clues to determine their word or category of the Transformational Loop. Ask them to write their word on the poster board.

Ask each group to choose one member to hold the poster board. Guide the other group members to return to their seats. Ask the three volunteers to stand at the front of the room with the words on their poster boards hidden from the group.

Ask conferees to get the Transformational Loop handout and fill in the blanks as you cover the information. They can also use the bottom and back of that handout to take notes throughout the session.

Use the following information to introduce the study:

[Slide 2] The information in the book *Transformational Class: Transformational Church Goes to Sunday School* is commentary for the book *Transformational Church* by Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer. David Francis gives a condensed explanation of the seven elements found in transformational churches. These seven elements fall into three categories. Ask the first group to show their word. Explain *Discern* by saying: *Transformational churches have a clear understanding of who they are responsible for reaching. They have a missionary mentality.* Ask the second group to show their word. Explain *Embrace* by saying: *Transformational churches embrace three core values of vibrant leadership, relational intentionality, and prayerful dependence.* Ask the third group to show their word. Explain *Engage* by saying: *Transformational churches engage in three essential practices of worship, community, and mission. All of these categories put together are called the Transformational Loop. Stetzer and Rainer found these categories and elements present in all of the churches that were experiencing transformational growth.*

Display the three posters and ask volunteers to return to their seats.

Comment: *Hopefully, all of us desire to be part of a church that is experiencing transformational growth both numerically and spiritually. Hopefully, all of us are in a church that desires to impact our community. But what if we're not? How can we use this incredible information to further the kingdom of God where we are...in our class?*

[Slide 3] *That's what this book is based on. Francis states that the purpose of this study is to imagine what a Sunday School class would look like if it reflected the seven elements found in transformational churches. The simple premise of this book is that a group or class that intentionally pursues the seven TC elements will likely become such a class: a Transformational Class!*

Explain to participants that they will be learning how this information can impact Preschool Sunday School. Explain that the content was written to help classes become transformational. They may have read through the book or have knowledge of it already and wonder how we can help a 3-year-old discern missionary mentality or how to help a baby become a vibrant leader.

Say: *These are valid thoughts!* [Slide 4] *For preschool leaders, we have to approach this information differently than adult Sunday School classes would. For us, it will be easier to study and apply this information in one of two ways: as a department with all preschool teachers working as a team to transform the preschool department or as teachers of a single preschool class working together to transform the class. Regardless of which way you approach the information, it is my prayer that you will accept the challenge to intentionally pursue these seven elements realizing that it is up to you to decide what kind of group you want to be, and choose what kind of impact you want to have on your community and world. So, let's get started!*

2. Discern (25 min.)

[Slide 5] Show conferees a hand mirror and a set of binoculars. Ask conferees to explain the difference between the two items. (A mirror looks back at you and binoculars look out at others.) Explain: *The first category in the Transformational Loop has only one element...Missionary mentality. In other words, your department or class has a commitment to intentionally make it your mission to reach out to others....in our case, preschoolers and their families and beyond.* Explain that the way we prepare and teach preschoolers demonstrates whether or not we have Missionary Mentality.

Ask conferees to listen to the follow statements and perform one of the following actions based upon the statement:

1. If the statement is inward focused or selfish, sit down and hold up their hand directly in front of their face (as if it were a hand mirror).
2. If the statement represents a missionary mentality, stand up and hold their hands up at their eyes (as if they had binoculars) to represent looking outward.

Read each statement aloud:

- Teachers frequently step aside during the session to chat with each other. (sit down/mirror)
- Teachers believe that only adult Sunday school leaders should participate in outreach and visitation. (sit down/mirror)
- Teachers begin teaching the moment the first preschooler arrives. (stand up/binoculars)
- Teachers are unconcerned about the size of their church. (sit down/mirror)
- Teachers contact preschool families throughout the week. (stand up/binoculars)
- Teachers are concerned about the needs of preschoolers in their community. (stand up/binoculars)
- Teachers do not attempt to get to know the parents of the preschoolers they teach. (sit down/mirror)
- Teachers are active in outreach and visitation in their church. (stand up/binoculars)

Emphasize that a missionary mentality is always looking outward (through binoculars) and is not content to only look inward.

[Slide 6] Break into three groups. Distribute Preschool Handout 2: Group Assignments 2. Allow time for participants to discuss and then present their findings. Be prepared to interject main points if needed.

3. Embrace (30 min.)

[Slide 7] Direct conferees to Preschool Handout 5. Share the following information:
The second category in the Transformational Loop is Embrace. Transformational classes embrace three core values. The first is vibrant leadership. Francis points out that the pastors of transformational churches didn't practice autocratic leadership but rather shared, multiplied and empowered leaders. What does this look like in Preschool Ministry? Many people think that leadership in the church (pastor, ministers, directors, etc.) looks like the triangle on the left...the leader is at the top and others are below them. However, true leadership is like the inverted triangle....the leader is the servant, at the bottom, supporting the others. Vibrant leadership is not autocratic, bossy or "holier than thou."

Invite two volunteers to stand before the group. Ask one volunteer to stand up straight and smile to represent a vibrant leader. Ask the second volunteer to slump and frown to represent a non-vibrant leader. Either place five masking tape loops on the arms and legs of each volunteer, or ask them to each hold out their hands.

Distribute the Leader Characteristics to conferees. Ask each conferee to read the Characteristic on the card aloud and either attach the card to a masking tape loop or place the card in the hand of the appropriate leader.

- enlists new teachers (vibrant)
- tends to gossip (non-vibrant)
- is critical (non-vibrant)
- is encouraging (vibrant)
- shares vision (vibrant)
- is lazy (non-vibrant)
- desires to start new units (vibrant)
- refuses to start new units (non-vibrant)
- is domineering and forceful (non-vibrant)
- builds relationships with teachers (vibrant)

Re-read the characteristics of a vibrant teacher. Highlight how transformational leaders are humble and confident, realizing that their primary job is to exhort and support everyone involved in carrying out the vision and mission of preschool ministry.

[Slide 8] Explain that vibrant preschool leaders realize they must stay focused on what they are here for. They need to know why we have preschool Sunday School.

Ask attendees to share a few reasons we have preschool Sunday School.

Say: Hopefully, we have Sunday School to lay a spiritual foundation for preschoolers. Therefore, we must be prepared to present developmentally appropriate spiritual information to preschoolers each session.

Give each group a Leader Guide from the LifeWay Preschool Sunday School Curriculum and give examples of how biblical information is shared through Bible conversation.

Explain: **[Slide 9]** *Not only should we be prepared to share information that will lay a spiritual foundation each week, but we should also expect new preschoolers each week. If preschool teachers truly believed this and worked toward this, it would change everything about their strategy. Leaders would arrive early. The room would be set up with newcomers in mind. Extra Bible-Learning Activities would be planned. Potential new teachers would be observing because vibrant leaders plan to start new*

units. One thing is for sure.....vibrant leaders aren't satisfied with things staying the same! They long for and desire opportunities to impact lives.

Ask participants to take a few minutes to answer the question on the bottom of the Vibrant Leadership handout: What steps can I take to become a more vibrant, transformational leader?

[Slide 10] Introduce the next core value: relational intentionality. Say: *This should happen naturally in a preschool Sunday School class! We have already experienced new relationships in our conference today as we discovered things fun things about our new friends here. Relationships matter. As we teach from week to week, we build relationships with the preschoolers in our class. We learn how they learn best, we can predict their behavior and discover how to best reason with them, we learn about their families, etc. In adult Sunday School, leaders are instructed to appoint care group leaders to make sure each member is encouraged and cared for. In preschool Sunday School, teachers can divide class members and commit to contact every family every week. We contact them to let them know we care, to learn of needs that may require prayer or care, and to share opportunities for participation in praying for and caring for others in the group.* Share a personal example of how contacting preschool families has helped you build relationships.

Instruct groups to think of a unique way to build relationships with preschoolers and their families through Sunday School. Ask groups to “act out” or pantomime (acting without words) their idea. Allow 5 minutes for preparation and then ask each group to share. Ask the remaining groups to guess what they are acting out. After each group has performed, discuss additional examples such as attending preschool choir performances at church; attending a ballet recital or ball game of a preschooler; spending time talking to preschoolers individually each week; ministering to families during crisis such as family death or loss of a job and celebrations such as the birth of baby or new job; inviting parents to help in a preschool class; having a class picnic at a local park; taking part in a community ministry project together, etc. Remind conferees that phone calls, cards, and speaking to parents at the door are still vital ways to build relationships as well.

[Slide 11] Say: *Prayer should be the fuel that drives everything we do with preschoolers. Let's discover how prayer will benefit our class or department and lead us toward transformation.*

Distribute Preschool Handout 3: Prayer Puzzle. Direct groups to assemble the puzzle in order to reveal the components of prayerful dependence.

[Slide 11] Refer to pages 27-28 as you discuss prayer before class and during class. Explain that the suggestion at the bottom of page 28 to pray at the end of class in care groups could be applied to older preschool classes at the end of group time.

Explain that the three times of prayer we just talked about are teacher-driven. The next three deal with the type of prayer requests we get in our classes.

Discuss how teachers can create a time for preschoolers to share things they would like to pray about. Share this example of a way to control prayer time with preschoolers: Each Sunday in group time, preschoolers hold up one finger to represent the one thing they can tell the group. Once they tell their one thing, they put their finger down and their turn is over. It takes time for them to get the concept, but once they do, it's a lifesaver. All the talkers get to speak and so do the quieter ones!

Say: As teachers we can help preschoolers move through these three levels of prayer. Prayer at the class level is general and safe: "Pray for my sick granny." Next is the community level. These prayer requests will turn more personal and be a little less safe. Because preschoolers are self-focused, this is the level most of their requests will be: "Pray for my thumb; I hurt it on the playground." The next level is the commission level. These requests will focus more on missions and on the needs for others to know Jesus. Preschoolers can learn to pray for missionaries, for people who don't know Jesus in our country as well as other countries, for someone who is in the hospital, for their family members and neighbors who aren't involved in church.

Discuss how these levels of prayer can apply to the leaders in the preschool department. Suggest creating a list of requests for teachers and directors with the department as a means of keeping up with families who attend sporadically, families who are good prospects, or families who haven't yet attended, requests dealing with current struggles teachers are having or specific names of unsaved family members or friends, requests about church mission trips or upcoming community outreach events.

4. Engage (30 min.)

[Slide 12] Ask conferees to name the final category in the Transformation Loop. Explain that Transformational churches engage in three essential practices. The first is Worship. This chapter contains very interesting information about Sunday School and worship as it pertains to adults, however, the most applicable information for preschool leaders is found on page 31

Say: One of the most important things we do is teach preschoolers how to apply the Bible to their lives. In our curriculum, everything we do during a supports the Life Application: the Bible story, Bible verse, Bible Learning Activities, Group time Activities, songs, etc. As preschoolers hear and participate in these things they are

learning. According to Francis, when it comes to Bible study, listening (learning) demands obedience. And obedience is worship. We can help preschoolers understand that when they make good choices, respect their parents, help others, share with friends, etc. they are worshipping God because they are obeying Him.

[Slide 13] Give each group three index cards. Have each group choose a Bible-learning activity from their Leader Guide. Ask them to write down what preschoolers will DO on one card, what they will LEARN on a second card, and how teachers can help preschoolers WORSHIP through the activity and Life Application on the third card. Once conferees are finished, guide them to pass the three index cards to the group on their right. Invite the new group to read the three cards and determine which one is the activity preschoolers will DO, which one explains what preschoolers will LEARN and which one shares how preschoolers can WORSHIP.

Conclude the activity by explaining how the Life Application is one of the best ways to engage preschoolers in Bible learning and developing a life of worship.

Discuss the importance of partnering with parents to help preschoolers learn to worship. (We can help preschoolers and their families worship God daily by providing devotional materials and encouraging their use. We can also help by equipping parents to talk about spiritual things with their children daily using such questions as “What did you talk about in Sunday School this week?” or “What is something you can do that makes God happy?” We can encourage families by sending out daily or weekly devotional thoughts to discuss as they are in the car, around the dinner table, before daily prayer time, etc.)

[Slide 14] Remind conferees that transformational churches are intentional about engaging people through community. Likewise, preschool leaders must be intentional about engaging people through community.

Instruct groups to discuss ways preschool leaders can create community and ways community might be hindered in their department and class. Allow groups to share their ideas.

[Slide 15] Discuss the difference in “missionary mentality” (how you think) and “missions” (how you act). Ask attendees for examples of each.

Comment: *Scripture teaches us that even though Jesus was equal with God, He emptied Himself and came to earth in obedience to God’s missionary plan for saving mankind. This is the spirit we must have if we are going to be preschool leaders on mission.*

Use the following information to discuss *release, reproduce, and reach*.

Release—Adult class members engage in missions when they release members to serve in preschool, children, and student classes. As preschool leaders, we’ve already been released!

Reproduce—Part of being a department or class on mission is starting new classes. While many of the decisions and logistics for creating new classes may not be our responsibility, we certainly can be intentional about reproducing leaders. Enlisting apprentice teachers to teach in your preschool class is a wonderful way to introduce them to the concept of teaching and also demonstrate what they would do. Bringing potential teachers into your ministry is a wonderful way to be prepared and ready to start new preschool classes with prepared leaders.

Distribute a sticky note to each conferee. Ask them to write down the name of a potential teacher from their church on the note and to place the note inside their Leader Guide when they get home. Encourage conferees to pray for the person each time they see the sticky note and to begin building a relationship with him/her. Suggest sending written note to the person, telling them they have been prayed for by the preschool department. Invite him/her to observe during a session and begin the process of enlistment with him/her.

Say: Sometimes teachers see changes such as releasing teachers, reproducing teachers and starting new classes as painful. But as we change, we will grow back stronger and healthier than ever!

Reach—Francis says “There is power in one class. There is also power in one conversation. Especially if it’s a holy conversation.”

[Slide 16] Read Colossians 4:6 and 1 Peter 3:15-16 from the Holman Bible.

Say: Preschool teachers can be engaged in reaching others by being prepared and comfortable sharing their faith, telling their story, and being ready to listen to the stories of others.

Distribute markers and maps to each group. Give the groups two minutes to list five unique places in their community where preschool teachers could “reach” preschoolers and their families. Instruct them to write the answers large on the map. As needed, help them think of places where preschoolers congregate and hang out (daycare facilities, recreation centers, parks, children’s museums or theaters, libraries, or birthday party sites). Remind conferees to use their binoculars and look out to see people who could be a part of the mission.

Share how leaders need to be ready to talk to preschoolers and their families when they meet them. Ask participants to discuss this question: *How can preschool leaders prepare to share their faith and tell their story?* (regularly discussing what God is

doing in their lives with someone in the preschool community, participating in outreach training events, truly getting to know people they're trying to reach, etc.)

5. CONCLUSION (20 min.)

[Slide 17] Read this quote from page 40 of Francis' book: *"Perhaps we're asking the wrong question: 'What can we do to get more people to join our church or our class?' Perhaps a better question would be 'What can our church or class do to make our community a better place to live?'"*

Discuss the difference in these two questions. Share how they can apply this in the preschool setting.

[Slide 18] Say: *This graphic of the Transformational Loop shows all three categories and all seven elements of transformation. You can start at any point and move to any point. There are no clear boundaries between them. The important thing isn't where you start but to be intentional and choose to start!*

Invite conferees to get back in the groups of three people from the beginning of the conference. Ask each conferee to share one element in which they desire to improve.

Close in prayer to end the session.