

## 31 Days of Great Expectations



**A compilation of blog posts from August 1-August 31, 2010 written by members of the SSSDA (State Sunday School Directors Association)**

## Why “Great Expectations” Sunday School? By David Francis



I have frankly been blown away by the positive response to my latest little book, *Great Expectations: Planting Seeds for Sunday School Growth*. You’d know why I’m so surprised if I told you the story behind why I decided to use that theme this year, which Bob Mayfield has invited me to do!

Some of my friends have commented, “We like your little books (which have been dubbed “Franciscan Epistles” within LifeWay), but they really all say the same stuff.” That’s probably true of *Great Expectations*, too!

I experienced a huge breakthrough last year in terms of my own expectations about Sunday School. The catalyst for that breakthrough was during preparation for an online debate

with Small Groups specialist Rick Howerton

<http://www.lifeway.com/sundayschoolvssmallgroups/>. As Rick, Bruce Raley, and I prepared, we had something of a simultaneous flash of insight that Sunday School was being pressured to fulfill expectations that were the domain of small groups on the one hand and discipleship groups on the other. It was frankly a moment of enlightenment to feel the freedom of just letting Sunday School be what it is! And to celebrate that its balance of biblical community and biblical content in an open group environment is exactly what makes it effective as perhaps the finest assimilation tool God has given the church.

Setting aside unreal expectations, however, is not the same as suspending all expectations! Sunday School classes that grow have high expectations. *High Expectations* was the original working title of the book, based on the tremendous research boost Sunday School received from Dr. Thom Rainer’s book [\*High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in Your Church\*](#). My boss, Church Resources VP John Kramp, actually recommended the *Great Expectations* title. Any parallels to the Charles Dickens classic by the same name are purely coincidental. If there is one allusion you could draw from the classic, it might be that Sunday School has sort of been down on its luck, but I believe the rest of the story is not yet written, and Sunday School may yet make a huge comeback.

The book does conclude with a really big expectation: a proposal that Southern Baptists could start 100,000 new adult classes by 2020, with 1,000,000 more adults in attendance. Plus all the kids! At the end of the day, that’s why I wrote *Great Expectations*, Bob! And as the champion of “Power of One,” you know that it will always come down to the work

of individual classes, one at a time choosing to just muddle along or decide to act on *Great Expectations*.

For the next 31 days, you'll enjoy reading articles based on the *Great Expectations* theme written by the finest Sunday School leaders in North America. These men and women, all members of a fellowship called the State Sunday School Directors Association (SSSDA), share a common passion for making disciples through Sunday School classes, small groups, and discipleship groups. I hope you'll come back every day this month to be challenged and inspired toward great expectations.

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Day 1

**[Expect New People Every Week](#)** By [Bob Wood](#)

New people make connections through open groups. "An open group expects new people every week." [1] Are we ready every week for new people? As I'm writing this, we have a guest in our home. How we treat house guests can be a model for how we treat Sunday School guests.

1. Clean Up the Clutter

When no one else is here, we get used to things lying around. When a guest is coming, we pick things up and clean things up. View your classroom like you're expecting guests; clean up the clutter.



2. Have What They Need

We make sure guests have what they need, like clean sheets on the bed and clean towels in the bathroom. Do you have everything you need for guests, like extra chairs and enough quarterlies?

3. Watch for Them to Arrive

When we are expecting guests, we open the front door and watch the driveway. Who is watching for guests to arrive at your church? Is there someone in the parking lot, at the church door, and at the door of your classroom?

#### 4. Welcome Them Warmly

When guests arrive, we give them a hug or a handshake and tell them how good it is to see them. How do you greet new people in your class?

#### 5. Pay Attention to Them

When we have guests, we don't ignore them and go about our regular business. We spend time with them. We talk with them. Do you have a way to make sure that someone pays attention to guests in your class?

#### 6. Introduce Them to Others

We introduce our house guest to our other friends. Does a new person to your class get introduced to all those folks they don't know?

#### 7. Give Them a Good Experience

We eat better when we have guests. We want to make sure they have a good experience. We try to make sure our guests aren't bored by finding things for them. In your class, will a guest be fed with an excellent Bible study? Will the Bible study experience be interesting and relevant (not boring)?

Expect, and be prepared for, new people every week.



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[1] David Francis, *Great Expectations: Planting Seeds for Sunday School Growth*, (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2009), 13.

Bob Wood is the Church Growth Ministries Team Leader, Baptist State Convention of Michigan. He seeks to help churches build up believers and in doing so build up the body of Christ.

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**Expect People to Say “Yes” To Ministry** By [Marie Clark](#)



I find that many people have “never done anything in the church” because they have never been asked; they don’t know how to go about getting involved; they think ministry in the church is for “super Christians”; or they are afraid they will appear presumptuous if they step up to do something.

A simple survey is an effective tool for organizing an Adult unit. By checking one or more items on a short survey, a member has already made a tentative commitment in their mind to be an active part of the class. When you call to enlist them, they are not surprised, and their mind is open to

serving. Surprise! Some people who volunteer for a particular task are ones you might never have considered.

Some of the benefits, especially as members “on the fringe” find something they can contribute, include members who take more ownership in the class ministry, become more regular in attendance, and are less likely to complain and more likely to work at a solution. An added plus is many “first-time” members involved move on to other responsibilities in the church.

Guidelines for using “Teamwork: Count Me In” Survey

1. Adapt your survey each year to fit your situation. List service opportunities with check boxes such as: Care Team; Outreach Team; Socials; Prayer Leader; Treat Schedule Coordinator; E-mail Person; Greeter; Class Secretary; Newsletter; Substitute teacher; Working in another age group.
2. Distribute during a class session. Be positive and *genuinely* enthusiastic. Giving people an opportunity to serve is an important part of their spiritual growth. Serving God should be a joy, not a punishment.
3. Introduction to the class: “Sunday School is too big a job for one person, because it’s much more than just listening to a teacher for one hour a week. If each of us will do one small part, some wonderful things can happen in our group. Take a minute to consider what you might be interested in doing. Here are the disclaimers! If you check something, there is no guarantee you will be asked to serve; and if you are asked, you do not have to say yes.”

4. Members can check items as you quickly explain what each task involves. Ask everyone present to turn in a survey, even if it is blank. Then collect them – don't let them go home because you will never see them again!

Don't forget: as an adult leader, you have a responsibility to help people know the "what" and "how" for their new responsibility. Regularly encourage them, praise them, and hold them accountable. One of your key tasks is equipping members to serve.

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Day 3

### [Sunday School's Most Un-Popular Expectation](#) By [Bob Mayfield](#)



Ask almost any Sunday School teacher or participant what they love about Sunday School and you'll get a variety of answers, such as: studying God's Word, ministering to class members, fellowship, prayer and more. But there is little doubt about the Sunday School directive that gets the most opposition and has got to top the list of most unpopular expectations of a class: *starting a new group*!

No doubt about it! Starting new groups is unpopular. If you want to swim upstream in your church, start expecting new groups. If you want to experience the second coming of the Inquisition, announce to your class that you are starting a new group. If you want to upset the seating chart in your class, then start a new group.

But let me share more...

If you want your church to grow... start new groups!

If you want to reach more lost people with the Gospel... start new groups!

If you want to re-engage inactive church members... start new groups!

If you want to involve more people in leadership... start new groups!

If you want to provide more opportunities for people to serve and use their spiritual gifts... start new groups!

By the way, dead fish only travel downstream.

Here is how starting a new group addresses  
each of the above statements:

First, for every new group your church starts, your attendance increases by about 10 people. We call it "The Power of 10". So if you want your church to grow by reaching 50 people in the next year, start 5 new classes. If you want your church to decline by 50 people next year, combine 5 classes.

Next, for every new class you start, as a general rule you will reach the following people:

- 5 inactive church members;
- 3 people will step up as leaders for the new group;
- 2-3 unchurched people will attend the group over the course of a year (and statistically speaking, at least one of them will accept Christ).

Starting new groups is the launching pad for all sorts of opportunities that are great for the church. New groups require new leaders. New groups provide more opportunities for more people with hospitality and administrative gifts to serve. New groups break up the status quo. New groups get the church moving.

I could go on and on about numbers and multiplication and reasons to start new groups. One thing I've learned from previous experience though is that understanding the science of new groups is not a great motivator to start new classes. Cold facts are no substitute for a warm heart. It's heartwarming for a teacher to see people that they have disciplined step out of their class and start a new group. It's heartwarming to see new people connecting to God and each other.

New groups require regular people to exercise the one thing that we all should have in abundance but often are found lacking - *faith*. It takes *faith* to start a class, *faith* to become a teacher or leader, and *faith* to serve. It takes *faith* to believe that God will be *faithful*. A new group is a way for a leader and a couple of core members to put the Gospel on display and be a part of redeeming wayward human souls.

If we are going to have a Sunday School awakening, it will have to include new groups. It is time for us to make starting new groups the "cool" thing to do. Starting new Bible study groups is where we need to send our best people.

It's time for a new awakening of the Sunday School and classes need to lead the way. Buck the status quo, swim upstream and start a new group... The movement starts with you.

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Bob is the Sunday School and small group specialist for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. Bob has also served the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention and he has been minister of education at First Baptist Church, Chandler, AZ and Indiana Avenue Baptist Church in Lubbock, TX

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Day 4

### **Expect Leaders to Arrive Early** By [Darryl Wilson](#)



Dwight Moss, a friend serving an Alabama church, said: "We deal with...people with different personalities and backgrounds. Some people simply do not see the importance of being on time...." In some cases, our best efforts won't change behavior. But some fail to arrive on time because of our behavior and lack of expectations. Expect leaders to arrive early!

First, stop to consider your own example. Do you arrive early? If you are perpetually late, your expectations will be cancelled by your actions. Be early!

Second, communicate during enlistment that early arrival is an expectation. Make it part of your teacher/worker covenant. Communicate it clearly in job descriptions. Address the issue during training and planning. Communicate the expectation well!

Third, without benefits to being early or consequences for being late, why should your leaders show up early? What incentives can we provide? Help leaders recognize benefits of early arrival!

- Set individual coaching times with teachers/workers, affirming/addressing this issue as appropriate.
- Offer donuts and juice/coffee before Sunday School, but put it all up at start time (perhaps in a "teachers' lounge").
- Early arriving teachers can enjoy one-on-one time with early pupils after the classroom is ready, reducing some home visits/calls.
- Resources and equipment for the lesson plan can be secured easier when arriving early.



- Could early-arriving teachers give a test to early-arriving attenders measuring retention of last week's lesson—offering teaching affirmation?
- Could early-arriving leaders reduce the number of required annual training events?
- By arriving early, class will start on time, prayer and announcements won't be rushed, and the lesson can be taught well.

Fourth, behavior won't change without knowledge of consequences. Help teachers of younger ages understand what happens when they arrive late. The first person in the room is in charge. Think about safety. Think about first impressions (guests often arrive early). We are dishonest when we post a start time we don't honor. Point out consequences!

Fifth, Saturday night calls to your regular latecomers may help when making the transition. New habits take time to form. Affirm those who are on-time. Reinforce being on time privately with latecomers. Individualize!

It takes three weeks to develop new habits. Don't give up. God deserves our best effort. Expect leaders to arrive early!

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Darryl Wilson has served as Director of the Sunday School Department for the Kentucky Baptist Convention since 1997. He served as Minister of Education in churches in South Carolina and Kentucky. He is the author of [\*The Sunday School Revolutionary!\*](#), a blog about life-changing Sunday School and small groups.

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Day 5

### **Expect Great Bible Study** By [Rick Ellison](#)



Imagine yourself standing on the second floor of a Christian education building. You look down at the parking lot and watch the people exiting their cars. Many carry Bibles. Some carry diaper bags. Some carry refreshments. People are smiling, joking and talking about sports and the events of the weekend. The multitudes headed for Bible study also bring with them other things. They bring stress and the need for direction, comfort, encouragement and hope. There must be

excellent Bible study so that people will leave better than when they arrived. Preparing mentally and spiritually during the week for excellent Bible study will make an eternal difference in people's lives. Here are some things to consider.

1. **Consider Your Calling As A Teacher.** There will never be another teacher in the church age exactly like you. Just as no two people have the same fingerprints; God has uniquely created you with personality, life experiences and a spiritual journey that gifts you to teach God's unchanging truth.
2. **Study The Teaching Methods Of Jesus.** Jesus used a number of different teaching methods including lecture, discussion, parables, object lessons and varied types of questions. He illustrated His teachings with words and actions. He saw the uniqueness of people and taught them differently. He knew the Old Testament scriptures.
3. **Use Valuable Principles Of Lesson Preparation.** Evaluate last week's lesson. Read the scriptures early in the week as God teaches you. Meditate on the passage during the week. Pray each day. Study the teacher and learner's material and helps such as commentaries. Develop a teaching plan. Consider something to create interest as you begin. Develop key questions. Plan the presentation and learning activities. Plan for a good application. Teach directly from your Bible with notes and other material to the side.
4. **Be A Constant Student Of The Bible.** Sharpen your skills by constantly reviewing the Bible. A free resource entitled, "**Discover the Treasure**" is available at [www.alsbom.org/ss](http://www.alsbom.org/ss). It is a simple overview of the structure, people, places and message of the Bible. It is a good review for teachers.
5. **Understand That God Is At Work As We Teach.** God is active in the heart and mind of every believer as we teach. Have you ever had someone thank you for teaching something that you didn't communicate? Who taught them? It was the active power of the Holy Spirit at work in their life.

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Rick Ellison is a Sunday School associate for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. In addition to his ministry to Alabama Baptists, Rick has also carried the Olympic Torch at the 1996 and again in 2002 Winter Games along with his wife, Sheila.

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Day 5

## **Expect New Classes to Start Well** By [Sean Keith](#)



One of the most difficult but rewarding things in my ministry has been starting new classes. There is no “One Way” to start new classes. There are, however, some bad ways to start new classes. For more ideas and information on “how to start” and “how not to start new classes”, go to Lifeway’s website at [www.lifeway.com/newunits](http://www.lifeway.com/newunits) or read more from some of the other blogs listed.

In this post, I want to talk about how to start a new class well. There are four things you must do to make sure your new class is successful.

- **Contact! Contact! Contact!** – Remember that one of the keys to a successful start is relationships. That doesn’t just happen. Contact weekly. Start weekly contact even before the class starts. Keep up weekly contact after the class starts. And by the way, vary your methods. Call one week; send a personal note the next; then spend time with them in an environment away from the church on occasion.
- **Teach the BEST lesson you can every week** – Why would you invite someone to a bible study and not prepare the best bible study experience you can? Oddly enough, tons of bible study leaders do it every week. Don’t be one of them.
- **Involve Others** – Oddly enough, when you start a new class, people are more open to leadership roles in the class. The longer the class exists the less likely they are to step up. Involve others early and often.
- **Pray and Play together** – Plan a fellowship before you start the class. Plan fellowships monthly or once every two months. Nothing builds intimacy in a group than playing together or praying together.

Even if you do all of these things to the best of your ability, that does not guarantee success. I also know that if you don’t do these things listed above your chances of success diminish greatly.

So, start with a positive mindset that your new class will start well. Then set your heart and mind to do the four things above to improve your chances of success.

*Blog was written by Sean P. Keith who is the Sunday School/Discipleship Strategist for the Louisiana Baptist Convention*

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Day 6

### **Expect an Incredible Group!!** By [Bob Mayfield](#)

Probably all of us are familiar with the story in Luke 5 of Jesus healing the paralytic whose four friends brought him to Jesus and lowered him down through the roof. It is a great story of redemption and forgiveness, and an incredible display of Jesus' power. I mean, it is a LOT easier to tell someone that their sins are forgiven, but to tell a paralytic to take up your sleeping bag and take a stroll is another thing altogether!

But at the end of this parable, tucked away in verse 26 is something very revealing. "Then everyone was astounded, and they were giving glory to God. And they were filled with awe and said, 'We have seen *incredible* things today'". (HCSB)



These folks apparently went to church that day with low expectations. I guess they expected a few hymns, someone teaching their way through a familiar Bible passage, collect the offering and then let's all go to KFC for some chicken. But then Jesus showed up...

As Sunday School leaders, it is essential that we expect incredible things every week in our class. Our bar of expectations should be high so that our group has to stretch themselves to get over it, rather than be able to crawl over it. We should expect the following things from ourselves and our group:

- Expect each person to study their lesson (nothing adds depth like personal Bible study);
- Expect guests and new people every week;
- Expect a prayed over and well prepared Bible study;
- Expect people to share from their soul;
- Expect the group to participate in fellowship and mission projects;
- Expect God to heal broken hearts, mend marriages, save our kids, and do the impossible (Mark 9:23 – Everything is possible to the one who believes).

Our expectations are reflected in our goals. In essence, goals are really how we see our expectations playing out over time. A good question to ask yourself and perhaps even your class is "What do we expect to accomplish this year?" And no, turning in the record box on time for 52 weeks doesn't count!

This coming year in Oklahoma, I am asking all of our Sunday School classes to take up the following challenges:

1. Contact every group member every week;
2. Start a new group sometime this year;
3. Adopt an unreached people group;
4. Conduct a class mission project;
5. Baptize at least one person through your group's ministry.

In other words, our classes and groups should expect God to move through them during the course of a year. What would happen in your class if your group met the five challenges listed above? If every member every week got a phone call to see how the group could pray for them? If every class started a new class next year? How might you see God at work if some people from your group went to a foreign land to pray and share Christ with the people group you prayed for? If your group found a need in your community and organized itself to meet that need in the name of Jesus?



And yes... I really do believe that people can still get saved in Sunday School!! In fact, let's start expecting it! Let's expect Jesus to show up and do incredible things through your Sunday School class!

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Bob is the Sunday School and small group specialist for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. Bob has also served the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention and he has been minister of education at First Baptist Church, Chandler, AZ and Indiana Avenue Baptist Church in Lubbock, TX

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## **Expect Lives to be Transformed** By **Sean Keith**

To make my point, I need to tell you a little of my story. I was raised Catholic. I knew a lot about God, I just didn't have a personal relationship with Him. While in college, I started dating a Baptist girl and started attending church with her. I had attended church all my life, but these people were different. To make a long story short, God touched my life through their testimony and I was transformed. The key to that transformation was something I had never understood before—forgiveness.



In all the sermons I heard; all the college Sunday School classes I attended; all the conversations I had with college students at that church; it was revealed to me that I could be forgiven. I desperately needed forgiveness. Not because I was such a bad guy, but I recognized that I needed it. I had sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. That truth changed my life completely.

A few years later I attended a seminar and realized that not only had God forgiven me, but God could help me forgive others. A truth that changed my destination to heaven instead of hell also changed my relationships with others.



**Now my point:** We are ministers of reconciliation. Christ is our Redeemer and we are his ambassadors. That truth that changed my life and changed forever how I will relate with others was experienced through the relationships I made at Glendale Baptist Church. God used the preaching of His Word in Worship, the relationships I had with other college students and the teacher of the collegiate Sunday School class to "transform" my life. If God can use them to change my life, He can use me to transform others' lives. Every day we should "expect lives to be transformed".

*Sean Keith is the Sunday School/Discipleship Strategist for the Louisiana Baptist Convention*

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**Expect Friends to say “Yes” to Offers to Attend** By [Belinda Jolley](#)



He made me an offer I couldn't refuse. An invitation to Sunday is just that. It is an offer to discover who God is, who Jesus is, and why He came to live on this earth. It's an offer to find peace and hope regardless of life's circumstances.

A friend refusing the invitation is not usually the problem. The problem is usually friends don't invite friends to attend Sunday School. Here are a few suggestions to help you invite and expect friends to say "yes."

1. Invite them. Offer to meet them at a specific time and place at the church so you may accompany them throughout their experience at church.
2. Talk about things your class wrestles with in Bible study. Make comments such "I am in a Bible study group that meets each week and these are the kinds of things we wrestle with there."
3. Talk about how you have seen people's lives changed in your class.
4. Connect everyday conversations and activities with things that remind you of Sunday School and, more importantly, with your relationship with Jesus Christ. Gifts, books you are reading, movies, local news stories, etc. are great opportunities to make invitations to friends.
5. As friends encounter crises or know others who do, talk about things you see and hear during those times. Remind friends how you can still find peace and hope through your personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Talk specifically about how your Sunday School class ministers to one another in times of crisis.
6. Pray for lost friends by name. Tell them you are praying for them by name. Some people fear they may embarrass friends. I find friends are touched by knowing you care about them.
7. Expand your circle of friends. Develop new friendships with people who may not be followers of Jesus Christ. Start with places you already frequent and things you already love to do.

Attending Sunday School does not make one a follower of Christ. However, hearing, understanding and obeying the Word of God can. Friends should expect friends to say "yes" to an invitation to attend Sunday School. You may find an expanded version of this article at [www.scbaptist.org/smallgroups/invitingfriends.htm](http://www.scbaptist.org/smallgroups/invitingfriends.htm)

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Day 9

**Expect Group Members to Invite Friends and Family to Class** By [Kiely Young](#)

Every believer I have known has friends and relatives that do not attend Bible study and many who are not yet believers. If we organize our Bible study groups into smaller groups of six, and each member contacts a friend, this should not really be a challenge.



**Question: Do we have a biblical mandate to invite our friends and family?**

Answer: Absolutely the Great Commission and the Great Commandment both give us motivation and reason to invite others as we show them the love of Christ.

AND, 2 Timothy 2:2 gives us further biblical encouragement, *"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men (and women) who will be able to teach others also."*

Can we really EXPECT this to happen in a Bible study group, which are friends asking friends to come? Again the answer is YES. Expect, encourage, equip, and enjoy to work of seeing lives changed. Celebrate the contact. Congratulate the connection.

Communicate the courage. Then together give God the glory for the changed lives.

**Ten ways to make this happen:**

- 1) Give a challenge to your group.
- 2) Ask each member to invite a friend or family member every time you gather.
- 3) Make a prayer list of those being invited.



- 4) Ask for an update each time you meet.
  - 5) Celebrate weekly those making contact, making it a contagious experience.
  - 6) Ask friends and family to enroll when they attend.
  - 7) Ask group members to share their faith testimony enabling friends and faith to hear and seeing life transformation.
  - 8) At least monthly give opportunity for friends and family to respond to Christ.
  - 9) Encourage group fellowship outside of class to build connection with new friends.
  - 10) Give God the glory for the results.
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Day 10

### **Expect Spiritual Growth** By [Sandy Coelho](#)



Recently, I spoke with an excited brand new mom who could not wait to tell me how her newborn son was changing everyday: his first smile, gaining weight, growing hair, etc. She was expectantly sure that her baby would continue growing and she anticipated nothing less.

Have you considered having this same automatic, positive expectancy about the spiritual growth of your class? If we are excited and expecting God to work in our students' lives, that attitude will spill over as we prepare for our students to feast at a table that provides the nourishment which will promote spiritual growth. The elements on your spiritual table will include:

**PRAYER** – Our prayer list must go beyond the typical “organ recital” of hoped-for outcomes. We can pray effectively for lost people to be saved by name. We can pray for wisdom and spiritual protection for our leaders and missionaries. We have the opportunity to pray for the conviction of the Holy Spirit to fall on ourselves, our church, other churches, our nation and world and usher in a great awakening!

**BIBLE STUDY** – Is your Bible study focused on personal life-changing transformation? Students get excited as they move beyond information transfer to discovering and applying God's Word to their lives.

**NURTURE AND ACCOUNTABILITY** –As we promote an atmosphere of nurture and development, we facilitate our students' spiritual journey! This environment will also plant seeds of accountability as students grow and mature.

**SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES** – There is only one way to excite our students to engage actively in the spiritual disciplines that will draw them into a closer, more intimate walk with the Father, and that is to actually be experiencing this ourselves.

I know that all of this probably seems overwhelming and beyond ourselves and it really is...but it is *not* beyond what God can do through us. As the Sunday school leader, expect God to do the work in your life first and when He does it will naturally flow to your class. Get ready for an amazing journey as you expect great things of the Lord!!!

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Sandy Coelho serves as the Lay Leadership Development Director at the Baptist Convention of New England. She loves to read and is currently working on her family tree.

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Day 11

**[Expect Members to Participate](#)** By [Bob Wood](#)



How do you feel when you're around someone who dominates the conversation, someone who doesn't let you "get a word in edgewise"? You can't participate in the conversation; a dialogue becomes a monologue. Sometimes Sunday School can be like that. What would be different if we expect members to participate? When you, the teacher, expect members to participate, you will:

- Expect them to prepare. Give the members resources in advance to study the lesson and be prepared.
- Sit down. When you stand in front of the members, you communicate that you expect them to sit quietly and listen.
- Sit in a circle. Place chairs in a circle where everyone can see each other rather than in rows facing the teacher.
- Ask questions. If the teachers talks all the time no one else can participate (except to listen).
- Ask "better" questions. Thought provoking questions that cannot simply be answered with "yes" or "no" will encourage thinking and participation. Questions that move beyond mere facts to interpretation and feeling encourage participation.
- Allow "wrong answers." Some answers will be clearly unscriptural and will need to be gently corrected. But if you correct members every time they don't see things exactly like you do, you will stifle participation.
- Embrace silence. If you ask a thought provoking question, it may take time for members to answer. Be quiet and give them some time.
- Keep the class size small. With twenty people it would take twenty minutes for everyone to speak for just a minute. Imagine if the class is even larger.
- Use smaller groups. Some members are uncomfortable speaking even to a small group. But if you allow them get in pairs or triplets for some learning activities, they will participate.

Most folks realize that kids need to be actively involved in learning. We forget that this is true for folks of all ages. If we want to see spiritual transformation in the lives of our members, we will expect them to participate in the Bible study.

By the way, we can also expect members to participate in caring and praying for one another as well as in inviting and welcoming new persons. But those are topics for another day.

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Bob Wood is the Church Growth Ministries Team Leader, Baptist State Convention of Michigan. He seeks to help churches build up believers and in doing so build up the body of Christ.

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Day 12

**Expect the Class to Care Enough to Organize** By [Rick Ellison](#)

*"I remember driving down a busy highway one day in rush hour traffic. It was getting dark and cars were traveling bumper-to-bumper at a high rate of speed. As I drove, my headlights suddenly illuminated a disturbing picture. Two little white dogs were on the side of the road. It was obvious that one had been hit by a car. It lay lifeless on the ground. The other little dog panicked. He didn't know what to do. He kept nudging the injured dog with his nose trying to get him up on his feet. It was all to no avail.*

*It was a confusing situation for a little white dog whose companion now lay stricken on the ground. The dog would nudge his friend, and then start to run away to get help, and then would return to his companion, not knowing what to do. Finally, he ran back into the road across busy lanes of traffic, barely being missed by the cars. I followed this scared but determined dog as he ran through the neighborhood. Finally, the panicked dog stopped at*



*the front door of a house. I knocked on the door. Sure enough, it was where the dogs lived. I took the owner to the place where his dog had been hit, and observed him carefully picking him up in his arms.*

*Each day on our journey through life we encounter people who seem to have it all together. However, if we could only see the stress, strains and bruises in their lives perhaps we could take a moment to make their life brighter. We also encounter people who obviously are injured by life's hurts who need our help. God has called each of His followers to a ministry of help and*

*encouragement to others.*

*In our busy churches and Bible study groups we can lose the vision of helping even hurting people. In many of our churches today we do not know the people on our membership and Bible study rolls that may need a godly touch."*

I wrote these words in a workbook entitled, "Bottled Tears, Developing Spiritual Skills for Effective Ministry to Others." There should be the expectation that every Sunday School class will care enough to organize for ministry. Care groups are still the best way I know to keep informed and in touch with everyone on our Sunday School roll or ministry list. A ministry leader assigned to a group of perhaps 6-8 people for care can make a big difference in someone's life. It's the attitude that not one person on our roll will be left on the side of the road unattended.

It is critically important that we train our Sunday School class members in principles that will help them to be effective in ministry to others. The "Bottled Tears" workbooks are designed to do that and can be ordered from the Office of Sunday School/Bible Study Ministries of the Alabama Baptist Convention, State Board of Missions for \$2.00 each. An accompanying DVD for training groups can also be purchased for \$1.00. Email [rellison@alsbom.org](mailto:rellison@alsbom.org) for an order form. Other ministry helps are available on our website at [www.alsbom.org/ss](http://www.alsbom.org/ss).

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Rick Ellison is a Sunday School associate for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. In addition to his ministry to Alabama Baptists, Rick has also carried the Olympic Torch at the 1996 and again in 2002 Winter Games along with his wife, Sheila.

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Day 13

### **Expect Class Leaders to Train** By [Darryl Wilson](#)

Consider this scenario. You are giving one of the most important jobs in the world to an individual. The job has the potential to impact individuals, families, communities, the nation, and even the world. History could be changed through carrying out the job effectively. How much should you expect of the person filling the position? How high should the expectation for training be set?

The potential for every Sunday School leader is this very scenario. (Think about teaching Billy Graham as a teen.) But there is an even greater factor: teaching can impact the eternal destination of those without Christ. Our Lord deserves our best effort. This can be achieved through a growing relationship with Him, prayerful preparation, and effective training.

Expect class leaders to train. When a class leader stops learning, he or she stops growing. Bank tellers, school teachers, and salespeople are required to receive training regularly. Sunday School is no less important. There is so much to learn about the assigned age group, teaching, learning, the Bible, biblical history, reaching, records, evangelism, fellowship, caring, ministry, serving, relationships, communication, group dynamics, and more.

Expect class leaders to train. When leaders are enlisted, share the expectation for training. Make training attendance part of the job description and/or worker covenant. These two first steps are essential.

Expect **new** class leaders to train. Require new leaders to complete training prior to serving. This can be delivered through one-on-one meeting, video, internet, reading assignment, or other. Cover the basics and develop the relationship. Help new leaders know where to get resources and help.

Expect **experienced** class leaders to train. But what if no training expectations were communicated? Gather class leaders to work on a worker covenant that includes training as one of the areas of conversation. Their expectations may exceed yours!

Expect class leaders to train. Class teachers serve as coaches for all class leaders. The job of the coach is to get to know leaders, ask questions, check on progress, listen, and offer help. With the right questions, doors for training conversation will occur naturally.

Expect class leaders to train. Move toward requiring every leader to complete training annually. Provide training delivery variety to address different learning styles and schedules. Make it interesting and relevant. Keep it brief. Hold leaders accountable to complete the requirement.

Expect class leaders to train. Watch them blossom. Watch as individuals, families, classes, the church, the community, the nation, and even the world are impacted!

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Darryl Wilson has served as Director of the Sunday School Department for the Kentucky Baptist Convention since 1997. He served as Minister of Education in churches in South Carolina and Kentucky. He is the author of [The Sunday School Revolutionary!](#), a blog about life-changing Sunday School and small groups.

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Day 14

**[Expect the Class to Lead People to Christ](#)** By [Dwayne Lee](#)

When you think about the word "Expectation" there is always this non-voiced thought that follows, "action comes next!" I remember growing up as a child hearing these words, "I expect you to do your homework," "I expect you to finish your plate before you

can go and play with your friends." The list goes on and on but you get the picture. I mean we have always been surrounded by expectations, whether by parents, friends, teachers, classmates, employers, spouses, etc... at times we exceed those expectations and other times we fall short, but at least we gave it "the old college try!"



As a Christian there are expectations as well. In God's playbook, the Bible, there are expectations in which we should follow for example, the Ten Commandments, there set before us are some expectations. Which by now you understand there is some type of action or response to follow. The Bible is full of expectations but the greatest expectation comes from Matthew 28:19, 20, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all*

*nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always to the end of the age."* We have heard this verse in every way imaginable. We have heard sermons about it, books have been written about it, seminars & conferences have been conducted for it and yet the understanding of action or response is not there. I think we know the expectation but ignore to respond to level I believe Christ would have us too respond.

What would have if a Sunday school class began praying over names of lost people on a regular bases? What if that same class provided opportunities to engage those same lost people so that they would hear the gospel message? What if this class was expected to lead people to Christ? Is that asking too much? Was Christ asking too much when He



set forth the command? I don't think so! I believe we have everything we need to win this world to Christ. Listen to this historical truth, from the time Christ started His earthly ministry and called His disciples to the time you get to Acts 19 where it says, "that all of Asia heard the Word of the Lord" that time-line is only 25 years! Most of our churches and Sunday school classes are older than 25 years and yet our communities go by the wayside because there is no

expectation of us leading people to Christ.

When we get a burden (not for the lost) but for Christ to come and transform us into what He wants us to be, then winning the lost will be a result of that surrender. When



our normal conversation is about Jesus more than it is about anything else, the lost will be a result of our time spent with Christ.

I believe it is time we start holding each other accountable about sharing our faith. I believe each one of our Sunday school classes need to start expecting to hear stories about how we got to share our faith with someone during the course of the week and maybe how they came to know Christ as Savior. I wonder what our classes, churches, and communities would look like if we became intentional about our faith and actually expected our classes to lead people to Christ. It may take 25 years to turn your community upside down but it can start today! Remember Jesus said, "I am with you ALWAYS!"

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Day 15

### **Expect Leaders to Be Prepared** By [Daniel Edmonds](#)

I boarded an airplane bound for home and was greeted by an announcement from the pilot who stated that we were going to be delayed while they searched for a co-pilot. A passenger across the aisle from me said, "Why don't you do it?" I explained that I wasn't trained or prepared to fly an airplane and would not stay on board if they allowed untrained, unprepared people in the cockpit. None of us would trust our life to a pilot, a doctor, or anyone unprepared to care for us. Wherever we go, we expect that people who serve us will be trained and prepared to do their best. Why should we expect anything less when we are in Sunday School?

Everyone serving in Sunday School, from greeters, hospitality leaders, fellowship leaders, outreach leaders, care group leaders, to teachers and beyond should be in place ahead



of time and be prepared to care for members and guests properly. Lack of preparation can lead to poor teaching, wasted time, a bad first impression on guests, poor communication of events, failure to care for members, and decreased participation.

Steps to ensure preparation by all leaders include proper enlistment, thorough



training, clear expectations, and accountability. Often in enlistment we downplay the importance of the position or over-emphasize its simplicity. Statements during enlistment like, "it won't take too much time," "just give it a shot" or "there's not much to it" can cause people to be haphazard in their efforts. In enlisting leaders for any position, one should have a clear description of the job and stress its importance in the overall mission of the Sunday School.

Enlistment should come with the promise of thorough training and clear expectations. When I was in management for United Parcel Service, I learned why the company was so successful: employees were thoroughly trained for their position and all expectations were clearly defined. The company made sure the employees knew their jobs and did them to acceptable standards. There was no doubt of what was desired and how important it was for everyone to do their job correctly. If it is a ministry worth doing, then people should know how to do the work and the anticipated results.

Leaders cannot be held accountable unless they are properly enlisted, trained, and given clear expectations. If these steps are taken, accountability will not be resented. In fact, accountability will spotlight the importance of the ministry and highlight the work of the leader.

If you take the proper steps, you can expect leaders to be prepared and the mission of Sunday School to be strengthened.

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Day 16

### **Expect Leaders to be Accountable** By [Dale Davenport](#)

**Colossians 3:23** *"Whatever you do, do it enthusiastically as something done for the Lord and not for men, knowing that you will receive the reward of an inheritance from the Lord – you serve the Lord Christ."*

Over the years the standard of accountability for leadership has lowered to such a level that there is hardly any expectation from the Sunday School/small group class or from the Sunday School/small group leader. The teacher/leader teaches the class out of a sense of need,



responsibility and traditional values. We attend the class out of a sense of obligation, responsibility and traditional values. We may hear a good lesson but leave without any thought of spiritual good or any commitment to act on what has been taught. Years ago, Findley Edge wrote a useful book called "Teaching for Results." This matter of teaching for results is what we are now discussing as we look at expecting leaders to be accountable in the ministry entrusted to them.

If we are going to go beyond merely teaching Bible facts and enter into the realm of leading members to putting revealed truth into action in their own lives and into the life of their churches, we must face up to the fact that leaders must be held accountable in more areas than the presentation of biblical content. Accountability of leaders in our Sunday School ministry comes at a high price in this fast paced age. Are we willing to pay the price?

### **Accountable Leaders ...**

- are going to be leaders with a surrendered life to the teachings and principles of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- are going to have a wholehearted devotion to the Bible teaching ministry of the church.
- will be willing to spend quality time in studying God's Word as well as spending genuine time in prayer.
- will have love and compassion for the people being taught, realizing that the ministry is actually 24/7 not just an hour on Sunday morning.
- will love their ministry and exhibit a co-operative spirit within the Bible teaching ministry and the church.
- will teach within the theological framework of his/her church
- will faithfully teach gospel-centered lessons, giving opportunities for people to be saved

Accountability has a high price to pay! The standards of accountability are in front of us. It takes pastors, minister's of education, Sunday School directors and teachers standing together empowered by the Holy Spirit and being the "whole body fitly joined together" to see the standard raised high and the church starting to change. Are we willing to lovingly expect leaders to commit to this standard or are we content with the status quo?

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Day 17

**Where Leaders are Born** By [Mark Langley](#)

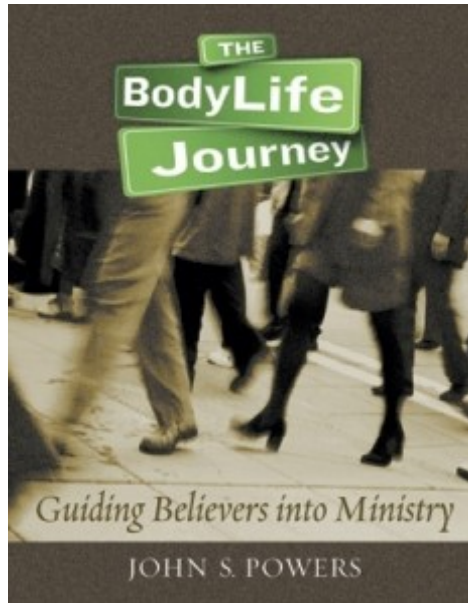
I have been involved with the Montana Southern Baptist Convention in helping churches grow holistic Sunday Schools for the past 17 years. It was in a LifeWay December meeting where I heard Bill Taylor speak a truism into my life. He said, "Gentlemen, Sunday School is the employment agency of the Kingdom." That statement rolled over my soul as I thought about how utterly true it was. I recalled being a young 23 year old student at Southwestern Seminary and how blessed I was to be called as the Minister of Music and Education to a small congregation on the outskirts of Fort Worth, TX. That little church was my perfect training ground. Everything that I theoretically learned in class, I could immediately field test the principle in my church. It was also in this setting that I begin to understand the truth of Bill Taylor's statement. I commuted to school with a couple of other seminarians who said in the car one day, "I wish I were pastoring a church and gaining some practical experience. The only job I can find is stocking the Sears warehouse." I immediately invited the two of them to come help me grow a Sunday School. I explained that a Sunday School class is the perfect microcosm of the church. It is practically the living cell of the organism, carrying out every function of the whole. They accepted my offer. One of them took on an existing class and his wife began to work in the children's department. The other decided to start a new young adult class from scratch which I called a "paper" or prospect class. His wife became our church pianist and started a pre-school children's choir. I watched Bill Taylor's truism bear itself out. Today, one of those seminary friends is pastoring a large church in Mississippi. The other friend is a NAMB appointed church planter in the Northwest Baptist Convention. Through the years they have thanked me for giving them opportunity to learn to do ministry in a small urban church on the outskirts of Fort Worth.



Sunday School is a natural leadership development tool when done holistically. It is most natural if you are an age grade worker. You must become a leader to survive. This seems obvious to me. You must master the developmental level of your age calling. You must master the age-appropriate teaching principles. You must take upon yourself the humble servant leadership of Christ in order to patiently serve pre-schoolers, children, or students. However, I believe the greatest threat to leadership development might be the

adult class. Leadership is not just a natural outcome of an adult class. You must be more intentional in this setting. In my observation of Sunday School classes in Montana, there is the tendency to sit, soak, and sour in an adult class. Members who sit and watch the one-man show every Sunday will not mature simply through exposure to the Word alone...even if they have an excellent Bible teacher. A Bible study group is not necessarily a holistic group and will not automatically produce leaders. We once conducted a needs survey of our pastors in Montana to discover that they declared the number one need of their church was leaders. The adult class has the potential DNA to become the seed bed of leadership for the entire church.

Here is how I teach our small Montana churches to produce leaders through Sunday



School. Begin your Sunday School year with an organizational party. With everyone in the room, conduct a S.E.R.V.E card survey. (Available from LifeWay in the *BodyLife* participant's manual by John Powers.) I also have them conduct the life-line exercise. (Available from *Refocus Your Ministry* through Church Resource Ministries by Terry Walling.) These exercises help every member discover God's will for their life. Then we organize the class members into teams categorized as EDFMW+Prayer. (Available from Gene Mimm's *Kingdom Focused Life* with an addendum by Thom Rainer.) Teams of Evangelism, Discipleship, Fellowship, Ministry, Worship, and Prayer are formed. Members of the class align themselves into these six

teams according to their calling. Now, everyone must have a job on a team. We then construct our annual calendar. Activities such as fellowship parties, teaching assignments, VBS involvement, record-keeping, home group discipleship studies, outreach, missions and ministry trips, administrative responsibilities, etc, are all plotted on the class calendar and organizational chart. Team responsibilities are all assigned according to calendared projects. Now, do you see what has happened? This Sunday School class will become more than just a donut-eating, bible study which meets around a round table every Sunday morning. It has now become a small group that will morph into a ministry team. People in this class will grow in their calling and become the leaders they were meant to be. This kind of holistic class will produce other age group workers, pastors, missionaries, evangelists, worship leaders, and workers of every sort.

Through my 45 years of Sunday School work, I have tested God in this method of leadership development. And yes, Bill, the Sunday School can indeed become the employment and deployment agency of the Kingdom.

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Day 18

**Expect Members to Grow** By [Dale Davenport](#)

*"Therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, I urge you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God."*

Romans 12:1-2



We are to be living, productive, and growing disciples. Whether we connect with the "Great Commission" of Matthew 28:18-20 or follow the mandate of Acts 1:8, we need to have the heart-set passion to not be content with where we are in our Christian growth but with where we should strive to be in our obedience and maturity in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is something terribly wrong in so many of our churches where someone can attend week by week, month by month, and year by year and never change. Hebrews 4:12 states, "For the Word of God is living and

effective and sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating as far as to divide soul, spirit, joints, and marrow; it is a judge of the ideas and thoughts of the heart." So if the Word of God is living, effective, sharper, and penetrating, the complacency and stagnancy of so many Sunday School members is not a problem with the Word but with us. The truth is, we have met the enemy and it is I.

The solution to the complacency and stagnancy is the heart-felt realization that we are expected to grow! There has to be from the pastor, Sunday School Director, teachers and class members an expectation and understanding that God wants to be actively

involved in their lives on a 24/7 basis. Listed below are some helps in this expectation growth process.

### **Expect Members to Grow by...**

- |  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| • Having a genuine relationship with Christ.               | Romans 10:9-10  |
| • Abiding in Christ.                                       | John 15:1-8     |
| • Getting into the Word and letting the Word get into you. | 2 Timothy 2:15  |
| • Having a focused prayer life.                            | Romans 8:26-27  |
| • Learning to love one another.                            | John 13:35      |
| • Witnessing to others as light and salt.                  | Matthew 5:13-16 |
| • Ministering to others like Jesus.                        | Luke 4:18       |

The key is the "Expectation Level" of each individual member, believing that the Holy Spirit is present and wants to empower and guide them as growing members. This expectation level works itself out by the daily and practical application of the seven expectations listed above.

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Day 19

### **Learning from a LEGO: Connect with Others** By [Belinda Jolley](#)

Ole Kirk Christiansen founded The LEGO® Group in 1934. He took the first two letters of two Danish words meaning "play well" to come up with the LEGO name. Christiansen was unaware that one meaning of the word in Latin is "I put together." The 2009 company profile emphasizes all LEGO elements are fully compatible, irrespective of when they were made during the period from 1958 to the present or by which factory." ([Company Profile 2009](#))



LEGO toys are dependent on their connecting with one another. Just as these toys allow people of all ages to learn and develop through play, Sunday School is a great way for people of all ages to learn and develop through relationships. God wants people to connect with one another. Relationships are important to God.



Relationships are a key value of Sunday School, too. You should expect people to connect with both members and prospects, but we cannot assume connecting takes place. We must be intentional.

You may be connecting with others if people are...

- sharing prayer praises and concerns on behalf of others
- talking about how God is working in other peoples' lives
- gathering beyond the session, including structured class fellowship times
- serving together in the community

The list goes on. My favorite question that helps me gauge if people are connecting in my church is to ask how many people in your Sunday School class do you feel comfortable calling at 4AM. If people are in Sunday School 3-6 months and have not established at least 2-3 relationships with others, they probably won't be around for long.



David Francis

Apple

A great resource of helping people connect with others is [Connect 3: the Power of One Sunday School Class](#). Connect<sup>3</sup> considers

catalysts that move people in Sunday School toward personal growth and increased connectedness. The concepts presented in Connect<sup>3</sup> focus on Sunday school participants becoming intentional about connecting with others on the class level, the community level, and the commission level. Classes and individuals can evaluate whether they are connecting with God through His Word, through a community organized for care and ministry 24/7, or helping each other live out The Great

Commission down the street and around the world. Regardless of which level at which people are connecting, you can use these materials to discover ways to help people connect with others.

"People are not just looking for a 'friendly church,' they're hungry for friends." [Ed Stetzer and Thom S. Rainer, *Transformational*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing, 2010), page 100.]

Remember, just as LEGO toys allow people of all ages to learn and develop through play, Sunday School is a great way for people of all ages and stages of spiritual development to learn and develop through relationships.

Other "connecting" resources:

[Keeping Class Members Connected](#) – This article provides timeless suggestions for Sunday School leaders to prevent people from becoming disconnected in the first place.

Steve Sheely, [Ice Breakers & Heart Warmers: 101 Ways to Kick Off and End Meetings](#), (Nashville, TN: Serendipity House, 1998) – This book provides ideas for helping people get to know one another based on how long group has been together, type of group, topic, or mood of the group.

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Belinda Jolley serves as the Director of the Adult Ministry Office of the South Carolina Baptist Convention. Belinda and her husband, Steve, enjoy starting new classes at First Baptist Church in Rock Hill, South Carolina.

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Day 20

### [Expect Fellowship Opportunities](#) By [Mark Miller](#)

*Party!!!!* Most people love parties! A proven principle for growing Sunday Schools: *Every class should invite every member and every prospect to a fellowship (party) every month.* It's hard to form "relationships" and come into "community" when people sit in rows looking at the back of each other's heads on Sunday mornings. Ed Stetzer declared, "the church needs to move from rows, to circles, to provoking one another to love and good deeds." Opportunities for fellowship should be expected to move people from the auditorium, to the classroom, to the dining room, to the community. Fellowships are essential because relationships are important.

The Bible states that the early church practiced fellowship. *And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayers.* HCSB Acts 2:42. Today's classes and churches should be engaged in fellowshiping with each other and with God. In other words, healthy classes expect and provide opportunities for fellowship.



When I think of party, I think FOOD and FUN! Fellowships normally involve FOOD...Food naturally brings people



together. In 2005, Gallup was commissioned to do some research for Group. According to the results, some 77 percent of highly satisfied members have eaten a meal with people in their congregation (who are not members of their family) at some point over the last year. Only 56 percent of somewhat satisfied or dissatisfied members have shared a meal together. FOOD and Fellowship are important. So let's party.

Adult classes should enlist someone to serve as the Fellowship Coordinator or develop a Fellowship Team. This person or group would be responsible for planning ongoing activities and events that bring people together for fun and fellowship. When planning for fellowships think about this acrostic:

- Purpose (Why: Just for fun or to respond to a need of a person in the class or community)
- Arrangements (What, When, and Where)
- Responsibilities (Who)
- Themes (Some of my favorites: Luau, Christmas, Everything Chocolate, Super Bowl Viewing)
- Y'all Come (Promote)

Fellowship opportunities build a sense of community among the members of the class but they also provide an opportunity for evangelism and outreach. Josh Hunt wrote in *You Can Double Your Class in Two Years*, "most people who are opposed to the gospel are not opposed to ice cream." Fellowships provide an informal casual setting in a neutral, non-threatening place to know and be known and to love and be loved. Every class should invite every member and every prospect to a fellowship every month.

Building relationships takes work....Make Fellowships an Important part of your Sunday School class.

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Day 21

### **Expect Pastoral Support and Involvement** By [Steve McNeil](#)

A dynamic, growing Sunday School class is made up of many components. One critical feature is a class that engages in ministry with one another. Another way of saying ministry is "pastoral support and involvement."



In a church I know of, a new pastor came to town and began to evaluate what the church was doing and he began to see where ministry needs existed. He met with the deacons and they evaluated their role. Current ministries and programs were assessed, some were dropped and new roles were defined. One of the ministry roles that the deacons dropped was a pastoral care role. Why would the deacons give up that important role? Because the Sunday School was already doing it.

The pastor began to notice that every time he would show up at the hospital to see

someone, there was already a Sunday School class member, teacher or friend there giving support. When the pastor would visit the birth of a new baby, or visit the funeral home, or go to a member's ball game or recital, there were Sunday School class members there giving support. The Sunday School was a real, relevant place where people were doing life together.

How does this happen? When a class is organized with an appropriate class structure, and people know what their role is, when classes have care groups that function by contacting each other, by setting up care group prayer chains, and keep track of each other in their care group, then "pastoral support and involvement" can take place.

People want to care for each other, because they want to be cared for themselves. Get your class involved in the age appropriate pastoral supportive opportunities that fit your class.

Young married couples – can help each other with baby showers, baby sitting, cook outs, kid time.

Median age couples – can help with babysitting and car pooling.

Empty nesters – can help as parents get to the age where they need care and often times need the support of a class when parents pass from this life to the next.

Senior adults – can help with life transition issues as well. They can help with trips to doctors and giving support during surgeries.

The bottom line is looking for needs, being sensitive to those needs and coming up with a reasonable plan to meet those needs. When a class does this, it will be a loving, caring place of pastoral support and involvement. You can expect it!

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Day 22

### **Expect Personal Follow-Up Of Every Guest** By [Tom Belew](#)



The goal of every Sunday School or small group is to lead people to be in a life-changing Bible study and to come to know Christ as personal Savior. People are much more likely to accept Christ and unite with a church when they are active in a class or group. Churches annually commit time and money to discover new people; it is only logical for a class or group to promptly follow up when someone responds to these efforts.

Amazingly, many guests are never contacted after they visit a church, class or group. All the hard work to get a person to attend is not followed up to get them actively involved. The fear of rejection seems to grip members and leaders, paralyzing their ability to take appropriate action. God's Word encourages us at this point: "For God has not given us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment" 2 Tim 1:7 (HCSB). God is with us as we follow up guests, and our desire is in harmony with His desire, to see people drawn close to Him.

### **Expect the church to have a follow-up strategy**

The best follow-up strategies have a multi-level approach for making sure follow-up happens. Typically, the approach includes staff contacts, key leader contacts and Sunday School or small group contacts. In the case of a family visiting, it is common for leaders of children, student and adult age-groups to be making contacts. The strategy should provide leaders or members with contact information, church information and reporting form or procedure. Class leaders should be accountable for following through on assigned contacts.

### **Expect leaders/members to make contact sooner than later**

Research has revealed that the quicker the follow-up the better. A class might have a strategy to make “glad you came” visits or contacts on Sunday afternoon. Some churches deliver cookies or a loaf of bread. Early in the week, the church or class might have an evening outreach ministry. Class leaders and members can pick up assignments and be off to make their contacts.

### **Expect leaders/members to honor guest preferences**

Today, people want everything they experience to be the way they prefer it. Our world is filled with personal choice; contacts from a class are no different. Leaders need to learn the community and age-group factors influencing personal preferences. Start by providing a way for guests to indicate their contact preferences. The list of options might include: call, visit, e-mail, Facebook or text message. As you make contact, honor guest preferences.



### **Expect the church to provide relevant information**

Relevant information should include:

- Guest contact information
- Map or directions if needed
- Church or ministry brochure(s)
- Tools for witnessing
- How to report the results

### **Expect leaders/members to report the results**

Every contact with a guest is a link in a continuous story. Each part is critical to understanding. Have a definite way to collect the results and build the story of each guest. The story helps leaders make future contacts more relevant and meaningful.

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Day 23

## **Expect People to Say “Yes” to Enrollment** By [Daniel Edmonds](#)

I had the opportunity to train a pastor and his church on how to properly enroll people in Sunday School. A few months later, the pastor and I attended a conference together on Sunday School health. The conference leader was sharing different ways to discover prospects. The pastor raised his hand and said, “We never have prospects!” The leader asked him if he had tried a variety of the techniques. The pastor replied, “We have tried them all, but as soon as we discover a prospect we ask them to enroll and they always



agree; therefore, they are no longer prospects.” I am certain that I do not get a “yes” every time, but I do expect it.

Why do I expect people to agree to enrollment? Because I do not ask them to commit to the group, but I ask them if they are willing to have a group commit to serve them. Several years ago, I came to the realization that enrollment does not represent an individual’s commitment to the class, but the commitment of the class to the individual. Enrollment is not about a person attending the class, but it is about the class attending to the needs of the individual.

Enrollment becomes the way a class extends its’ ministry and mission field by identifying people to whom it can demonstrate the love of Christ.

In general, when I meet someone I ask them if they have a group of people to pray for and support them. I tell them that I have a group that consistently will do that for me and that it brings me joy and comfort in my daily life. I ask them for the privilege of providing them with a group of people who will pray for them, share with them, and care for them if they have a need. I assure them that they have no obligation to the group, but that the group will be obligated to them. Then I ask, “Would you like to have a group of people praying for you, sharing with you, and caring for you and your family if you have a need?” I am not surprised when they say “yes!”

Sunday School has a mission of sharing the love of Christ with everyone. We express a willingness to be on mission when we offer people an opportunity to be enrolled. When they say, “yes,” provide the ministry that has been promised and you will discover that

when we live as Christ, He draws people to Himself. Expect people to say, "Yes!" to enrollment, and then complete the mission.

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Day 24

### **Expect Members To Mature And Leave The Group To Serve** By [Tom Belew](#)

The vision of every adult class is to have an increasingly bigger and bigger class!

No! No! No!

**It is to grow and mature members to carry out the work of the church.**

Along the road to growing the Sunday School or small group ministry many adult leaders get trapped into believing bigger is better. Don't get me wrong, there is nothing wrong with bigger as long as it accomplishes the ultimate goal.



Pastors, staff and key leaders have not helped adult leaders stay out of the trap. Far too many times, adult leaders have been recognized and rewarded for having bigger classes. Key church leaders should be rewarding the adult leaders who are equipping members and sending them into the harvest.

### **Plan to Mature Members**

Maturity does not just happen because you join a class. The wise teacher knows his/her pupils and uses the lessons each week to challenge them to grow and mature. In addition, the teacher begins to involve pupils in meaningful ways as they minister. First, just like Jesus, they take them along and they minister, and then they send them out to experience ministry on their own. All along the teacher is filling in the blanks with the insight and wisdom found in the Bible.

### **Help Members Connect the Dots**

The Bible teaches us that God has uniquely created each person, given them spiritual gifts and allowed them to develop skills. As a result, each person is especially equipped



and gifted for certain ministries. The adult teacher's role is to help class members discover God's preferred future. David said in Psalm 37:4 (NIV), "Delight yourself in the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart." As we get in harmony with God our desires match His and we begin to experience the rich blessing God has for us.

### **Commission Members to Serve**

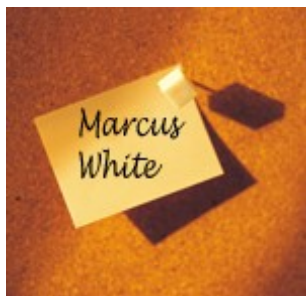
As we expect members to move into ministry and service, attitudes and perspective change. Classes with the attitude shift never lose members; the members just get a picture and a place on their missionary poster board. Prayer requests are filled with reports from members who are now serving in other ministries and classes. Fellowships are times for current class members and members in service to build relationship and celebrate what God is doing. Things like, "we are losing Bill and Sally today" are never heard. Instead, you will hear about the new ministry the class is taking on and that Bill and Sally will be heading up the work.

Determine now to make this year a record year for sending out class members into ministry.

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Day 25

### **Expect Evangelistic Prayer Every Week** By [Jason McNair](#)



Without thinking too hard, can you name two people you are praying for their salvation? It's not a trick question. In fact, all of us probably know someone close to us that doesn't have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The question is "What are you doing about it?" As a leader in Sunday School, it is vital that you model a habit of leading your class in evangelistic prayer, week after week. I have heard of some classes that have made a list of names (first and last) in bold letters on a bulletin

board and made a point to end every class session in evangelistic prayer for the people on that list who need salvation. The simple act of prayer will move hearts to action. Your members will be challenged to do something tangible that will bring the person they are praying for to a point of making a decision to follow Christ. Seeing the names in front of them will be a constant reminder of one of the core reasons that class exist; to equip one another to fulfill the Great Commission and live out the Great Commandment.

David Francis shares in his book, *Connect3*, the story of what happened in his church, Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, TN, when members began to write the names of lost friends and family members on the walls of their worship center with permanent markers. *"There are literally names on every paintable surface in that room. And I don't know if we'll ever be able to paint over them! Long Hollow seldom has a worship service at which someone is not baptized and is consistently among the leading churches in the Southern Baptist Convention in baptisms. Wonder if it has anything to do with prayer?"* NAMB has an article on their website entitled "Praying Your Friends to Christ" and in it, they share a simple acrostic that you can use to guide your class in having a H.E.A.R.T for the lost. Pray for:



- Receptive **H**ear  
*We need to pray that God would prepare the heart of the lost so that the seed of the gospel would take root.*
- Spiritual **E**yes and Ears Opened  
*The lost person is blinded by Satan and needs God to open their eyes and ears*
- God's **A**ttitude Toward Sin  
*When He comes, He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8 HCSB)*
- **R**elaxed to Believe  
*Pray God would grant repentance and that the lost will come to their senses and escape the trap of unbelief.*
- **T**ransforming Life  
*Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God. (Romans 12:2 HCSB)*

[http://www.namb.net/site/c.9qKILUOzEpH/b.743339/k.550F/Praying\\_Your\\_Friends\\_to\\_Christ.htm](http://www.namb.net/site/c.9qKILUOzEpH/b.743339/k.550F/Praying_Your_Friends_to_Christ.htm)

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*Jason McNair is the Religious Education and Collegiate Consultant for the Utah Idaho Southern Baptist Convention. He has served in the area of Youth, Collegiate and Education ministry for eighteen years in Florida, Texas, Utah and Georgia before joining the staff of the UISBC in 2009.*

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Day 26

**Expect Every Member to Receive a Contact Every Week** By [Rick Ellison](#)

**IS IT REALISTIC TO BELIEVE THAT WE CAN CONTACT EVERY SUNDAY SCHOOL MEMBER EVERY WEEK? YES!!**



What a thrill it is for preschoolers, children and youth and their parents to be contacted by their teacher about what's going to happen next Sunday. It means a lot for every adult to be called by someone in the class who simply says, "I just called to ask if there was anything I could pray for you about this week." If we would make those calls hundreds of ministry needs would be discovered.

The only motivation that keeps us consistent in our contacts each week is spiritual motivation. It's being a part of what God is doing on any given week. In 2006 I wrote a little book entitled, "Spiritual Food for Sunday School Leaders, God's Nourishment for Effective Service." I am amazed that over 20,000 copies have been printed. The book begins by referencing the encounter that Simon Peter had on shore with the Lord Jesus after Christ's resurrection. Three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved him. Jesus had an important place of ministry for Peter, but it wouldn't amount to much without his love for Jesus. Love was Peter's motivation for service.

Suppose we were sitting across the fire from Jesus and He asked us our motivation for service.

These questions are found in the first chapter of the book.

*"Suppose, as you sat by that fire, Jesus had asked you another question. 'Why do you serve me in Sunday School?' Suppose Jesus went on to ask even more questions.*

- 'Do you serve me in Sunday School because you would feel guilty if you didn't?'*
- 'Do you serve me in Sunday School because you feel obligated to serve your time?'*
- 'Do you serve me in Sunday School because no one else would serve in that position?'*
- 'Do you serve me in Sunday School because someone else would not let you say no?'*
- 'Do you serve me in Sunday School because your parents and grandparents did?'*

- ‘Do you serve me in Sunday School to receive the attention of being in front of the class?’
- ‘Do you serve me in Sunday School to make up for past wrongs?’
- ‘Do you serve me in Sunday School because it makes you feel like a good person, even more spiritual than others?’

*Imagine Jesus as he looks into your eyes with the fire reflecting on His face and asks you the final question. Not once but three times. ‘Do you serve me in Sunday School because you love me?’”*

“Spiritual Food for Sunday School Leaders,” contains practical helps for Sunday School work as well as scriptural motivation. The book can be ordered for \$1.00 from the Office of Sunday School/Bible Study Ministries, Alabama Baptist Convention, State Board of Missions. Email [rellison@alsbom.org](mailto:rellison@alsbom.org) for an order form. It’s also a great Sunday School leader appreciation gift.

Other Sunday School resources are available at [www.alsbom.org/ss](http://www.alsbom.org/ss).

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Rick Ellison is a Sunday School associate for the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions. In addition to his ministry to Alabama Baptists, Rick has also carried the Olympic Torch at the 1996 and again in 2002 Winter Games along with his wife, Sheila.

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Day 27

**Expect Change** By [Myron Grueneich](#)

I never left his class unchanged. I was an undergraduate student in Agricultural Education and Shubel Owen was my education professor. What he lacked in delivery and technique, he more than made up for with passion and enthusiasm. One day he made a statement that changed my perspective in teaching. He said, “To teach is to change lives, if there is no change, you have not taught.”



***Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it—he will be blessed in what he does.*** James 1:23-25

***For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*** Hebrews 4:12 The Word of God in the hands of a committed Christ follower poured into the lives of others is a powerful tool of change. Teachers are called by God to be change agents for His people.

Do we expect change in our Sunday School ministry? Or do we look more like a turtle on a fence post, stuck! When we prepare to teach do we have a sense of expectancy of change?

Here are some thoughts to consider for this week as you prepare for this upcoming Sunday:

1. How clear is the mirror of God's Word that you are holding up in your class? Make sure it is crystal clear so it provides a true reflection and that you do not insert your picture into the mirror frame.
2. Are you willing to change? What do you need to change so that your walk with the Lord is real and fresh? Nothing changes our passion and perspective like true life change.
3. Celebrate change. Begin each session with a time of celebration acknowledging how God changes lives. Ask your class, what wins can we celebrate together? Help them to understand that God is in the changing business and His shop is still open!
4. Drill down. Seek to drill down into the lives of people and help them to apply the truths of God to practical, everyday situations and needs. Pray for a deeper level of intimacy and provide a safe place for others to openly share what God is showing them in the "mirror" of their lives.
5. Avoid judgment. Let the mirror speak and let the scalpel of God's Word in the hands of the Holy Spirit do the work of a surgeon. Make yourself available for assistance and clean up!



6. Less is more. Try covering less ground and spend more time on practical application and how to encourage accountability. Turn off the fire hydrant and turn on the water fountain so everyone can get their fill. Let them drink slowly.
7. Dream. What would my class look like if God showed up? Would I be in the way if He showed up? Am I cooperating with the work of the Holy Spirit or am I crowding Him out? Can we hear the still quiet voice of God if he speaks to us in our class?
8. What is the take home? When you shop online you have options. The **wish list** allows you to come back at any time and desire them without cost. The **cart** means you are moving towards ownership but you still have the option of removing it at no cost or commitment. The **checkout** requires you provide payment for the item and pay the price of purchase. Once you click the mouse on the *submit* button, (appropriately named!) it is yours. You just bought it. How many times do your students leave your class with items on their wish lists? How many leave with items in their cart? (some classes gauge spirituality by how many items are in their cart) Bottom line: how many hit the submit button and have paid the price to own the truth? No ownership, no change!

***Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*** 2 Timothy 2:15. God has called us to help people to apply and practice the truth of God not to help them collect and categorize them like a librarian. Truth on the shelf gathers dust. Change comes when we expect people to “go to work” with the truth God gives.

Professor Owen was a wise man. To teach is to change lives. Expect change.

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Day 28

### **Expect Every Member to Share Their Story of Faith** By [Tim Smith](#)

Everybody has a story to tell. If we have given our life to Christ, we’ve a story to tell. Every story will be different because we all are different. There is great value in sharing your story and encouraging your class/group members to share as well.

The first benefit that most folks think of is that when we share our story with a person that has not yet received Christ, there is a very good possibility that they will accept Christ as a result of connecting with our story. When we



share our faith story with the lost and/or unchurched it is the best tool for evangelism.

Another benefit from sharing our testimony is we gain common ground with other believers. One of the best things you can do to build unity and fellowship in your class is to get your members to begin to share their stories. Ask a different person to share their story each week. Don't let them take over the class but limit their time to about five minutes. Ask them to write out their testimony and then read it to protect yourself and the class. You may want to have everyone write their story at the same time but later ask one person per week to share.

Give them some basic guidance on writing their story. Their testimony should be well thought-out and short. It needs to be clear and to the point. They should always be positive and never should they appear to be bragging about previous sinful lifestyle. The words that they use should be words that an unchurched person could understand. Their testimony should also be current in that they have something to say about what Jesus has done in their life recently.

There should be three parts to your spiritual testimony. The first is "MY LIFE **BEFORE** I BECAME A CHRISTIAN." A short sketch of your life before you became a Christian. Include how you became aware of your need for Christ. Don't use churchy words. Read Acts 26:4-5. The second is "**HOW** I BECAME A CHRISTIAN." Include the gospel clearly and briefly. Read Acts 26:12-15. The third part is "HOW I'M **CHANGED** SINCE SALVATION." How is your life different because you are a Christian? Provide a current example of how being a Christian has made a difference. Read Acts 26:19-20.



The personal testimony is like a baseball bat. The first part of the testimony is the knob, small but still very significant. The second part is the handle, larger than the knob but very few hits come from the handle. The third part is the barrel of the bat, the best place to hit a home run. All parts of the testimony are important but they must work together to get a hit.

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## **Are You Reproducing or Hoarding Leaders?** By [Belinda Jolley](#)



Several years ago an older lady died having lived each day pinching pennies to insure she was able to buy food, medicine, and pay her other bills. When she died, loved ones discovered she had hidden tens of thousands of dollars throughout her meager home.

Before you consider placing judgment on this lady's choice to hoard her resources, recognize leaders are either reproducing or hoarding leaders. You can likely identify

whether you or those around you are a reproducing or a hoarding leader. Think about the following comparisons and add your own to the list.

### **Hoarding leaders might think about or say some of the following:**

- How can we keep them from splitting our class?
- I wish we could go back to the time when we knew everybody in our church.
- How can we get the church to meet our needs?
- I'm not sure why John Doe is teaching a class here. He's only been a member here for five years.
- I know they need preschool teachers, but we really need some good members in our class.
- We painted our class and bought new chair cushions. Why can't the children use another room?
- Why should we go to the women's shelter? They aren't going to come to church here.
- We have not had a new member in 10 years, but that's okay. We really love each other.
- People know where we are if they want to come and join our class.
- Everything keeps changing. I wish we could just leave things alone so people know what to expect.
- I can't get people to do anything anymore. I guess I'll have to do it if no one else will.
- It is easier for me to do this than to try to get someone else to do it. After all, I can do it better.

**Reproducing leaders might think about or say some of the following:**

- When do we get to start a new class?
- Help me pray about who God wants to help teach the three year olds.
- Isn't it great to get to know Fred and Barbara? We would not have met them if we had not helped start the new class six months ago.
- Your class is like a rocket ship—constantly sending out great leaders. Help me think of some ways to celebrate those members your class has sent out to serve in the other age groups.
- Did you notice how Michael handled problems that arose when our class helped remove yard debris and replaced the roof damaged from the storm?
- How do you think we can encourage our classes to serve in the community more?
- Tell me how things are going as you lead your class leaders?
- Do you have everything you need?
- How can I pray more specifically for you and your class?
- If you find this time meaningful, what do you think you could do with your class leaders?
- Let's pray about who else might share your burden for the people who cannot attend Bible study on Sunday morning. Why don't we both enlist two prayer partners to help us pray about what God wants us to do and who He wants us to invite into this process? Can we talk again next Thursday?

Jesus is the best model of a reproducing leader. He taught multitudes, disciplined twelve, but he mentored three men. He spent time growing and sending out leaders. Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, reminded Moses of the need to grow and send out other leaders. (Ex. 18) What about you? Are you reproducing or hoarding leaders?

"And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." 2 Tim 2:2 (HCSB)

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Day 30

## **Connecting with Others in Sunday School Ministry** By [Richard Nations](#)

One of the great values of Sunday School ministry for me is the opportunity and forum for connecting with others on a deeper level in a small group. Bible teaching is important and should be done with excellence. But determine to have good connections among class members and prospects in place as well.



How do you 'connect' a group of a dozen or so class members? This day and age requires more than merely a paper class list and a prayer chain by phone.

Obviously computer technology gives us many opportunities for connecting people:

1. Emails to class members are the most basic step. Upcoming lesson topics, questions for thought and discussion, prayer needs and social opportunities are easily communicated to the group.

2. A next step from there might be a class blog-these are easy and inexpensive ways to connect people and they allow for interactivity as people can discuss things online.

3. Facebook and Twitter are also free and easy ways for a class to connect as a group and they are fast (and a lot of people are using social media).

4. For a class member who is stationed in the military a possible connection could be to use Skype and have face to face talk time with the member. Another option would be to video a lesson and send it by internet to the overseas class member.



5. But in my opinion, nothing takes the place of face to face connecting with a cup of coffee or a Coke. Inside or outside of the church building, make time to visit with class members and prospects and interact with them.

Technology isn't the answer. Connecting is the key. I sat down at my computer to write this blog post and my office computer network had to be shut down due to a virus on

our system. So I write this on a typewriter to be faxed to our blog coordinator. Technology will fail but the Lord is pleased when we connect with people in need of Him on a personal and spiritual level.

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Richard Nations is the Church Health Team Leader for the Baptist Convention of Iowa.

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Day 31

### **Expect Depth and Lasting Relationships** By [Tim Smith](#)

When I talk with Sunday School classes about developing relationships some of them look back at me with a funny look. I can hear what they are saying through their facial expressions. "I'm too busy to make new friends; they are going to take up all my time or I don't want someone to know everything about me." Developing friendships at church really does scare some folks.

I think our people feel like they are going to be required to spend every moment with their new church friends or even worse to them is the idea that all my dirty little secrets are now going to be known by everybody.

Let me help you by saying that it is not that bad and becoming friendly with folks at church is really not that hard. To make lasting friendships that are really deeper than the small talk we share at church, just remember that there are four things you got to know.



1. First, you've got to know their name. People really do love to hear their name. Recently I was praying with one of my new friends and during the prayer time I mentioned his name in the prayer. After the prayer he said, "It's been 20 years since I heard my name in a prayer."

2. Second, you got to know the names of those in their family. I'm not talking about their fourth cousin living in Brooklyn. You've got to know the names of the family members that live together.

3. Third, you've got to know their joys. What is that they love to do, what are their hobbies, what do they spend their resources on? I love baseball. I love to watch baseball, I love to talk baseball. I also love to go camping with my family. I could talk to you all day about baseball and camping. I would also guess that there is someone out there that likes the same things I like.
4. Fourth, you have got to know their hurts. All of us have hurts. All of us have something that has our attention. It may be an aging parent, it may be a rebellious child, and it may be our employment situation. It does not have to be anything major. It could be putting a new screen door on at the house or your daughter's piano recital. You need to know what has your member's attention.

If you want people to know you really care then you've got to know those four things about them. Now for the hard part; if you are going to let people get to know you, you've got to let them know those four things in your life!

Another note to teachers: If you don't know the above four things about all your class members, it is time for you to start a new class!

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Day 31

### **[Are You Expecting Guests?](#)** By [Phil Stone](#)

My mama was the queen of hospitality; it was surely her spiritual gift! Growing up, company at our house was always expected. Back then, people just dropped in for supper, and Mama always welcomed them warmly and fed them well! She did all that



she could so that no one ever left our house feeling unloved or hungry. No one!

My beloved wife is the new queen of hospitality. These days, most people don't come unannounced. When we're expecting company every drawer, closet, and cabinet is alphabetized and the house is made ready. Before the company arrives, everything is prepared so that when they drive up we are can greet them warmly at the driveway and walk them into our home. We do everything possible to make our guests feel welcome and at home in our home.

I'm sure your home is the same. What are some of the things you do to prepare for expected company?

Ever thought about how someone feels when they arrive at your church? Here's an illustration: What if you went out into your neighborhood and walked up to the door of a home; one that you did not know the residents. You don't bother to knock, but you reach out and turned the door knob to open the door. What might you be expecting to find? Probably some very surprised residents. What might be your feelings at the time? Very nervous!!

Those of us who were born in the church and have been in and out of churches all of our lives have no problem; seen one, you've seen 'em all. We know Baptists! However, when the unchurched walk up to our church doors, they're walking into "our territory"; it's almost like walking up to an unknown home, barging in, and saying, "we're here!" What might they be expecting? What might they be feeling? What can we do to make them feel warmly welcome like Mama's house or prepared as my wife does in our home?

The question is: Are you expecting guest every Sunday? Or are you surprised when one does come? I've been encouraged as I travel around our state of NC to see that more and more churches are preparing for guests, but I've been in enough Baptist churches to know that we have a ways to go! What can we do to prepare for guests?

When you're expecting guest at church, you do the same as you would if you were expecting guests in your home. Here are a few things I've observed churches doing to prepare for guests:

1. Clean the house! Baptist churches are notoriously messy. Clean out the clutter in the corner and the old curriculum stacked on the piano. I know. I've seen it.
2. Have a special place for them to park and when they drive up, be there to greet them.
3. Have a welcome sign out for them, and walk them into your doors
4. Plan to make them feel authentically welcomed as a person for whom you genuinely care
5. Wear name tags so that they don't have to remember your names (kind of like place cards at the dinner table) and make one for them so that others can call them by their names – and be sure to do that!



6. Help them find their way around: kids rooms, their room, the sanctuary, especially the necessary rooms
7. Introduce them to new friends in a small group
8. Make them a part of a Care Group for ministry and connections that follow up on their visit
9. Sit with them in the worship service
10. Invite them to the next party
11. Involve them in an upcoming ministry (guests feel more at home when you allow them to help)
12. Become a real friend. Guests aren't looking for a friendly place; they're looking for friends.

Treat your church guests like you would your guests at home. They'll come back, but more importantly, you just might make a new disciple.

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