

# Partners



Partners is published quarterly by the WELS Commission on Youth Discipleship to assist those in Sunday school ministry.

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*Please contact us with any questions or for further information.*

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## Be a Leader Who Follows

by Dr. Joel Nelson, Administrator – WELS Youth Discipleship



President Barak Obama has been in office for about eight months now, and the very exciting, but drawn-out, presidential campaign season seems like a distant memory. You may not recall this, but at one point in the last presidential campaign, there were eight people officially running for President from the Democrat Party with two more mulling it over. The Republican Party also had eight candidates officially running, with four additional ones thinking about it. And just to be fair to the other political parties, there were two candidates from the Constitution Party, five from the Green Party, seven from the Libertarian Party, and 14 Independents running! All of these men and women were running because they felt they had the leadership talents and abilities required for the job.

Leadership is a huge topic of interest and study, and growing every day. Bernard Bass and Ralph Stogdill’s 1974 *Handbook of Leadership* cited 3,000 books, articles, and studies on the subject. Their second edition (1981) cited 4,700 and their third edition (1990) contained 7,500 citations. A 2009 edition could expect to have 10,000 or more references to books, articles, and studies on leadership.

Why is leadership such a big deal? Have you ever thought about that? I think there are two reasons: 1) everyone is impacted by some kind of leadership, and 2) everyone is a potential leader. John Gardner, an expert on leadership, expressed it this way:

“Leadership is dispersed throughout all segments of the society—government, business, organized labor, the professions, the minority committees, the universities, social agencies, and so on. Leadership is also dispersed down through many levels of social functioning, from the loftiest levels of our national life down to the school principal, the local union leader, the shop supervisor.”

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## Begin This Fall Thinking of Your Call

As teachers and staff members in your Sunday school, you have a serious responsibility toward God and toward the other members of the Sunday school. You are diligently and faithfully to instruct and train the children entrusted to you in the chief truths of the Word of God as they are revealed in the Scriptures and set forth particularly in the Small Catechism of Dr. Martin Luther.

You are to maintain Christian discipline in the Sunday school. You are to serve the congregation by your example of Christian conduct. You are to endeavor earnestly to live in Christian harmony with your students, their parents, your fellow teachers, the pastoral staff, and the elected leaders of your congregation. And you are to submit to the supervision of the pastor and others who are responsible for the conduct of the Sunday school, and with the help of God to do everything within the limits of your call for the general advancement of the kingdom of Christ.

You are assuming a serious responsibility, but the Lord of the Church has promised to be with you, to bless you, and to supply the gifts which are required for you to perform your duties faithfully. May God grant you his Holy Spirit and give you wisdom and strength to carry out your task, to his glory and for the spiritual and eternal welfare of souls.

Leadership is also a big deal because everyone is a potential leader. Alexander Astin, another leadership scholar, wrote, “A leader is anyone, regardless of formal position, who serves as an effective, social change agent, so in this sense, everyone is a potential leader.”

If you had to define the word “leadership” what would you say? One of the shortest definitions for leadership I ever saw was this: “Leadership is a process of influencing others to achieve a goal.” I don’t have to tell you that Jesus was a leader. If you Google the phrase, “Jesus on leadership,” you get 912,865 entries. But we really don’t need to do the Web search. We know Jesus was a leader and we know he influenced others. He prayed, he preached, he taught, he performed miracles. Many came to faith and achieved the goal of life everlasting.

For me, Jesus’ greatest leadership influence is seen in the way he lived his leadership. He was a loving, sacrificing servant. And the Bible encourages all of us leaders to be the same. In Mark 10:42-45, Jesus talks to his disciples and us about the contrast between worldly leadership and his leadership. These words are spoken after the episode where James and John lobby Jesus to set up a special seating chart in heaven: Jesus said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (NIV).

*The Message* puts Mark 10:42-45 this way: “You’ve observed how godless rulers throw their weight around,” Jesus said, “and when people get a little power how quickly it goes to their heads. It’s not going to be that way with you. Whoever wants to be great must become a servant. Whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave. That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve, not to be served—and then to give away his life in exchange for many who are held hostage.”

If someone—co-workers, members of your church, family, friends, people in the community, and especially fellow Sunday school staff and students, were to characterize your leadership, however it looks – whatever form it takes, would they be able to say that you are a loving, servant-leader like Jesus? Or would they say you throw your weight around and your power has gone to your head?

Dear fellow, Christian leaders, keep Jesus’ servant-leader model in your minds and hearts this Sunday school year and always. Pray that the Holy Spirit fill you with a personal leadership style that reflects Jesus, and makes others want to learn more about him and be leaders like him, too.

If leadership is influencing others to achieve a goal, let’s do all we can, with God’s help, to lovingly lead our Sunday school students and their families to Jesus and eternal life forever with him. There is no greater goal.

## Tell your friends to get Partners

- 1) Go to [www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship).
- 2) Click on the “Newsletters” image.
- 3) Click on the appropriate, blue “E-mail Notification” link.
- 4) Follow the steps in the “Delivery Methods” box at the very bottom of the page.
- 5) Watch for the e-mail about the new issue.

# Developing a Sunday School That Reaches Out

by Pastor Gary Pufahl — St. Paul First Lutheran Church, North Hollywood, CA



Lisa is a bubbly, energetic teenager who loves people. She has the ability to hold a conversation with anybody, and she knows how to make the other person feel at ease. She treasures her Lord as the most important part of her life. Lisa lives in a stable home where her parents, three sisters, and one brother love and care for each other. The family has had arguments and disagreements in the past, but they always knew how to work through those issues on the basis of Jesus' love and forgiveness.

Lisa and her family enjoy spending time together by volunteering at their church. Lisa is a Sunday School teacher, and she and her family immensely enjoy evangelism work. They volunteer countless hours following up on people who need to hear the gospel of the Lord Jesus. They love knocking on the doors of people who recently visited their church. Lisa's ambition in life is to someday become a missionary and work with orphans who need Jesus' love.



Mark has a different life. When he was five years old, his dad was shot to death by neighborhood gang members. Mark is also a teenager, but he has seen a darker picture with his family. His mother fell into deep depression after his father was shot. In order to feed the family she sold herself during the nighttime hours. Mark has convinced himself to stay away from drugs and gangs, but he still lives a tough life. His brothers are heavily into Crystal Meth. The only thing that keeps him going ev-

eryday is the connection he has to his Lord Jesus and the youth group that meets every week. Despite the problems that exist around Mark, he is convinced that Jesus will never leave him. He is confident that despite the sin inside of him and the temptations around him, Jesus will always love him and forgive him.

Mark has quite a few friends from the neighborhood parks. Many of them are consistently getting into big trouble. Even though Mark's friends and family have seen some big problems in their lives, they have noticed a difference in Mark. He always seems at peace. He always loves them, even though he has been hurt by them many times. He always seems to express joy and gratitude. His friends do not offer Mark a joint anymore because they know what the answer will be. Mark wishes he could be an excellent speaker so that his family and friends would know Jesus better. He just doesn't think that he is good enough to do that. Mark's ambition in life is to stay out of trouble and by the grace of God finally leave this sinful world and go home to heaven.

So who is the better "evangelist?" Lisa or Mark? At first glance we might say that Lisa is the better evangelist. She is excited about dedicating her entire life to witnessing for her Savior. She grew up in a loving and caring family who also love sharing Jesus with other people. She knows what to say and how to say it. Is she the better evangelist?

But what about Mark? He knows his Savior. He trusts that through all the trials and hardships of his life his Lord will never leave him. People around him notice that he is different. He has a peaceful aura with him that can only come from his Savior. Maybe the Lord is using Mark to reach out to his family and friends and those in his neighborhood. Is he the better evangelist?

It actually is an unfair question. We may have presuppositions in our minds about what makes a better evangelist. We may instinctively think that the person who is knocking on doors, giving a beautiful Law/Gospel presentation, and energetically leading others to their Savior is the better evangelist. But the Bible does not present one as being better than the other.

The same could be said of a Sunday school. We may think that the Sunday school that is running like a well-oiled machine, that has the best and latest technology, that is always energetic and upbeat, is the best Sunday School model for reaching out. And maybe it is in your setting. But is that always real? We

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# AUTISM WORKSHOP

**God's People Are  
Differently Abled**

October 10, 2009

Our Savior Lutheran  
Church & School  
Grafton, Wisconsin

8:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Keynote speaker, Alison Wolf, is the parent of three sons whose ages range from the teens to the twenties. Two are on the Autism spectrum. She will make basic information come to life as she shares the blessings and challenges of day-to-day life.

## Registration fee before September 23:

\$50 single

\$80 married couple

\$25 student

\$40/four person group  
rate.

(An additional \$10 fee  
will be charged to all  
groups after September  
23.)

[www.jcministries.org](http://www.jcministries.org)

1-888-600-8542

Sponsored by Jesus Cares Ministries,  
a ministry of The Lutheran  
Home Association.



# Be Prepared

by James H. Robinson

*For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel. Ezra 7:10*

People often ask us, "Are you prepared?" This is an important question because a lack of preparation can lose a game, bring disaster on an airline flight, or cause a company to lose money.

Pastors who are unprepared to deliver a sermon should not preach. Teachers who are unprepared to present a lesson should not teach. An unprepared teacher is wasting the time of the students who have come to learn more of God's glorious truth. Because the time allotted for Sunday school is often brief, teachers need to be well prepared.

The Bible text above tells us that before Ezra taught God's truth to Israel, he "devoted himself to the study . . . of the Law of the Lord." Ezra's devotion led him to take time to study the Word of God. Ezra wanted to know how the law should be applied to the lives of the people.

Dear teacher, do you set aside quality time to study God's Word in order to be prepared? A teacher needs to do this. Most important, you should ask yourself how you can clearly teach the gospel message that Jesus died for all. Then, you should ask God to help you apply his Word to your students. Your preparation should also include some thought on how you can effectively use visual aids and other resources to get your message across.

After you prepare, you are ready to teach your class. Ask God's Holy Spirit to guide you and give you wisdom to teach the Word of Truth.

***Dear Lord, thank you for recording examples of great men of faith. By your Holy Spirit, teach us to learn from them. As you led Ezra of old to study your Word before teaching it to the people, lead us to give ample time to preparation. Bless our work today and always. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.***

*This short encouragement is from the Sunday school resource called, "New Life for Your Sunday School." This resource contains 33 inspirational devotions to increase the joy of teaching, 25 practical projects to enhance your Sunday school's appeal, and 13 discussion topics for staff meetings. Because this 1995 NPH resource is out of print, you can download "New Life for Your Sunday School" from the Sunday School section of the CYD Web site: [www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship](http://www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship). Look under "Papers, Presentations, and Articles." Though an earlier publication, its contents are relevant today and would make a great tool for use with your Sunday school staffs in various ways.*

## Only At Sunday School!



A Sunday school teacher asked the children just before she dismissed them to go to church, "And why is it necessary to be quiet in church?" Annie replied, "Because people are sleeping."

Several children found a dead robin. Feeling that a proper burial should be performed, they secured a small box and some cotton batting, dug a hole in the backyard, and made ready to dispose of the deceased. The minister's 5-year-old son was chosen to say the prayer. And so with great dignity, he intoned, "Glory be to the Father...and unto the Son...and into the hole he goes."

# Why Not Observe Each Other?

*"Developing a Sunday School That Reaches Out"  
... cont. from page 3*

It's common knowledge that teams function and perform better when team members are just as concerned about their teammates' performance as they are about their own performance. So why not apply this with your Sunday school team by using the simple "Teacher-to-Teacher Evaluation" below? Figure a way to have Sunday school staff members take turns observing each other's teaching. Complete the form below for the teammate you are observing, and then get together and talk about the "results." Use it as an opportunity for mutual learning and encouragement.

Teammate Observed: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Teammate Observing: \_\_\_\_\_ Lesson Taught: \_\_\_\_\_

POST OBSERVATION: Date observations were discussed with teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

| #  | Teaching Area Being Observed  | Very good | Good | Fair | Needs Improvement |
|----|---|-----------|------|------|-------------------|
| 1  | The teacher conducted a short but meaningful review of the previous week's lesson.                |           |      |      |                   |
| 2  | The teacher had a stimulating/interesting lesson introduction.                                    |           |      |      |                   |
| 3  | The teacher stated and or wrote the lesson's aim/focus on the board.                              |           |      |      |                   |
| 4  | The lesson was clearly presented.   |           |      |      |                   |
| 5  | A variety of question types were present in the lesson.   |           |      |      |                   |
| 6  | Teaching and learning aids/objects were used and used appropriately.                              |           |      |      |                   |
| 7  | The teacher got all of the students to participate.   |           |      |      |                   |
| 8  | The teacher showed Christian love to all students.  |           |      |      |                   |
| 9  | The teacher recognized and acknowledged the efforts of all students.                              |           |      |      |                   |
| 10 | The teacher gave positive reinforcement to students.  |           |      |      |                   |
| 11 | The teacher made frequent contact with students through touch, comment, eye contact, smiles, etc. |           |      |      |                   |
| 12 | The teacher used humor appropriately and made the class time enjoyable and fun.                   |           |      |      |                   |
| 13 | The teacher encouraged students to stay on task.  |           |      |      |                   |
| 14 | The teacher was able to get all of the students' attention when needed.                           |           |      |      |                   |
| 15 | The teacher encouraged students to respect him/her and all classmates.                            |           |      |      |                   |
| 16 | The teacher really looks like he/she enjoys teaching.   |           |      |      |                   |

don't have to spend a lot of time discussing life before we quickly realize that life is full of disappointments, heartaches, pain, and frustration. If we want to develop a Sunday school that reaches out, we need to make sure that we have a program that is real. We need Sunday schools that are real about sin, real about problems, real about frustrations and more importantly real about forgiveness, real about God's solutions, and real about hope.

I believe that unless we as Sunday school staff and leaders really understand what outreach is, we will not be able to make our Sunday schools that way. Therefore, we need to study God's Word and look at Biblical principles pertaining to personal outreach. Then, we need to expand to thoughts in which we can implement those principles into our Sunday Schools.

*The above is from the introduction to "Developing a Sunday School that Reaches Out," one of the 20 mini-courses for Sunday school staff on WELS.net University. Go to [www.wels.net/jump/wnusstraining](http://www.wels.net/jump/wnusstraining), find Pastor Pufahl's mini-course, complete it, and help your Sunday school to become one that truly reaches out.*