

Partners



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

If You Could Design a Sunday School . . .

by Dr. Joel A. Nelson, Administrator – WELS Youth Discipleship

On our last Sunday school class of the year, I passed out paper and asked my 7th grade students to respond to this question: If you could design a Sunday school class/classroom/class period, what would it look like? Here is a representative sampling of what they wrote:

“I would want to make students closer to Jesus and to each other. It would be more than just a Bible story. I would be getting the kids very involved and making them think.”

“Get all the kids involved with writing on the board, games, and other things for kids to participate.”

“Use games, movies, computers, and the library in our lessons.”

“I would have it be fun and exciting so people would want to come back and learn about God all the more. I would have a classroom filled with cool activities.”

“I would play some contemporary and some traditional Christian songs. I would teach the lesson the first week and then have a video to accompany the lessons the second week. If I did not use a video, I’d use games that related to the lesson.”

Before I go on, it is important to note that these are not the comments of a bunch of Mountain Dew drooling, Grand Theft Auto playing, Ritalin dosed demons. These are basically good kids from overall good homes, and I think they gave some incredibly good answers. Their message is obvious: Get me involved; make me think; make it exciting and fun; help me get closer to Jesus.

What do you think your students would say if you asked them this same question? Go ahead, ask them. I bet the answers would be very similar – no matter the grade level. Children want to, need to learn in ways that truly engage them – actually all ages want and need this. And your Sunday school children want to develop a closer, more heart-felt relationship with Jesus, their classmates, and you, their teacher. They really do.

How exciting! What an opportunity! What a privilege! As you begin the Sunday school year, please, please, please do everything you can to make your Sunday school classes

(Continued on next page . . .)

If I could design a Sunday school . . .



engaging. Teach God's Word to your students in ways that make it come to life for them – and you. Your Sunday school teacher's guides have ideas. Resources like *The Word of Life Comes to Life* (NPH – 38-3086) and *The Hands On Bible* (Group, Inc.) can also help. The Fall 2004 *Partners* referenced several good books. Talk to the other Sunday school teachers on your staff. Tap the expertise of any Lutheran elementary school teachers nearby. Call public school teachers in your congregation. Get insights from your pastor. Beginning your preparation earlier is a huge help. As you look over your lesson for the up-coming Sunday and reflect on it throughout the week, you'll be surprised at the kinds of ideas that come into your mind to make your lesson connect with the visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners in your classroom.

And two things can comfort you: 1) It's not that hard. Think about your days as a student and what you did and did not like. Put yourself into your current students' shoes and heads. Get into it yourself and you'll find a classroom of kids getting into it also. 2) God's Word has power. The Holy Spirit will do the heavy lifting, taking the Word and your lesson and working faith through it in the hearts of your students.

Maybe you should start this Sunday school year by asking yourself the question: "If you could design a Sunday school class/classroom/class period, what would it look like?" And then realize, "Hey, I can! And I'm going to do my very best to make it one where my students are learning about Jesus in ways that make them come back again, and again, and again."

God's blessings on your year!

We Need Your Support!

Partners is currently made available to 8,500 called and lay ministers. As you know, it comes free of charge. In order to maintain this level of service and continue this ministry effort, we could use your help. If you are benefiting from this newsletter, please consider a financial gift to WELS-CYD and Partners. Thanks so very much!

Faith @ Work @ Home

by Kenn Kremer, Northwestern Publishing House

Some messages to the Christian home need constant repetition. The changeover in a [Sunday school] teacher's ministry constituency is on-going. And many parents need to hear these same messages over and over to reinforce their commitment for becoming more involved in each other's spiritual lives within the home setting. Here is a list of a dozen simple messages that cannot be repeated too often. Share them when you can with your students' parent(s):

- 1 Remind one another that Jesus really is always present.
- 2 Talk often about sins' eternal consequences and our forgiveness in Christ Jesus.
- 3 Receive the Lord's Supper regularly and often, and help children understand its spiritual value.
- 4 Celebrate baptism. Remind one another of the assurance that our baptism gives to us.
- 5 Treat salvation as an unexpected surprise every day.
- 6 Grow habits that put you in daily contact with God's promises.
- 7 Talk often and fearlessly about personal relationships.
- 8 Listen to each other with love and compassion.
- 9 Communicate with one another honestly, directly, and lovingly.
- 10 Devote time to worshipping God together every day.
- 11 Pray for a stronger faith. Pray for others.
- 12 View heaven as your goal.



CYD News Bites . . .

I Didn't Know That

(July 11, 2005 Ventura CA) "19 out of 20 Protestant churches (95%) offer, 'a Sunday school in which people receive some form of planned or systematic Bible instruction in a class setting.' . . . While the churches are often divided along denominational, theological, and methodological lines, the research points out that Sunday school remains one of the most widely embraced ministry programs...David Kinnaman, the director of the study, explained that, 'rumors of Sunday school's imminent demise are greatly exaggerated.'"

See the full article, "Sunday School Is Changing in Under-the-Radar but Significant Ways," at www.barna.org. Type "Sunday school is changing" into the search box.

Learn Sunday School Stuff On-Line

Very soon, through something called WELS.net University, you'll be able to work through on-line Sunday school teacher training sessions in the comforts of your own home. Sunday school staffs will also be able to work through training modules together if they so desire. Watch for more exciting details coming soon.

Why Should We Care About Sunday School?

Sunday school is a Christian education vehicle, and God's Word emphasizes the value of Christian education for the young.

- *From infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 3:15*
- *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6*
- *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 3:18a.*
- *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28:19-20*

WELS "always" has.

- *Our Church – Its Life and Mission: The Story of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (1990) mentions that in 1858 seven WELS congregations had "Sunday schools" that were taught in the afternoons and were like the "Bible and mission classes that pastors were to teach according to a resolution passed at the first synod convention." "Modern Sunday schools" were introduced some time later (pg. 107).*
- William Fischer, WELS Secretary for Part-time Education (1966-1990) said, "WELS has a long history of interest in Sunday school. The old Board for Parish Education (BPE) oversaw Sunday school ministry as well as the WELS school system for as far back as I can remember. In the late 1960's when a new Sunday school curriculum was needed, I was called to spearhead the project as the first Secretary of Part-time

Education. We developed the *God So Loved the World* curriculum. After that, Sunday school became a ministry that was given a special focus separate from the ministry of the elementary school."

Synod conventions and delegates look out for it.

- Every WELS corporate restructuring has insured that some entity/unit is responsible for Sunday school. The synod mandated development of *Christ-Light@* included a strong encouragement to make it appropriate for Sunday schools.

It has great potential (One congregation's story).

- St. Paul's Lutheran – Muskego, WI. Sunday school (SS) had about 50 children and 7 teachers. Only one student also attended the Lutheran Elementary School (LES). The same SS nine years later, had 215 children (100 from the LES) and 31 teachers. St. Paul's Sunday school has remained strong with student enrollments in the 200's ever since.

** Next issue we'll explore in more detail the things St. Paul's did to strengthen its Sunday school ministry.*



Tell Us Something We Didn't Know

After surveying 11,000 adults and youth from churches in several denominations, researchers Peter Benson and Carolyn Eklin said, "Christian education matters much more than we expected. Of all the areas of congregational life we examined, involvement in an effective Christian education program has the strongest tie to a person's growth in faith. While other congregational factors also matter, nothing matters more than effective Christian education. And this is as true for adults as it is for children."

Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations, Search Institute, 1990

Resource Recommendations

Movie Clips for Kids

Group Publishing / 0764426923 / www.grouppublishing.com / \$16.99

From the Group Web site: Get kids totally into your next Bible lesson with video clips! All clips are rated SW (safe and wholesome—pulled from mostly G and a few select PG films) and guaranteed to make a big impact on your kids to get them talking, laughing, thinking, but most of all into what you have planned! Designed to work great as part of Sunday school, midweek, children's church—anywhere quality creative ideas are needed in children's ministry!

This book comes with its own disclaimer. The authors are forthright with the fact that they work hard to keep the clips wholesome (all movies rated G or PG), but that will not guarantee that you or someone in your church will not find the clip offensive. You will need to watch the clip before you show it. The book has a set of devotions on about 30 Old Testament and 40 New Testament Bible stories. There are also about 30 "hot topics" for children. There is a helpful topical index as well as a movie index. Most parents will probably have many of the films in their home video libraries. If not in your home already, public libraries and video rental outlets would have them. I would recommend this book with certain qualifications.

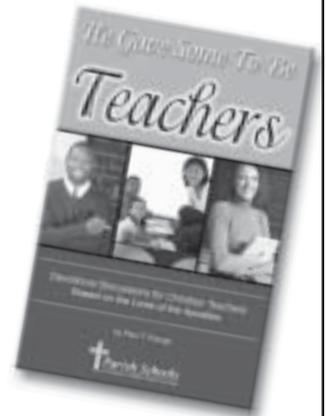
Pastor Steve Schmeling, St. Paul's-Menomonie, WI

***There is now also *Movie Clips for Kids: The Sequel* Group 0764426923 \$16.99**

He Gave Some to Be Teachers

Northwestern Publishing House / #388065 / \$5.00 each

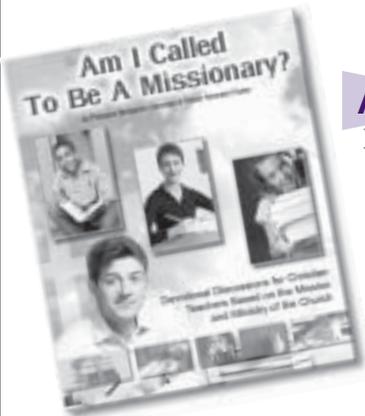
A follow up to the popular study series, *They Called Him Teacher*, these studies are designed to examine from the Scriptures how the gospel worked on the personalities of each of the Apostles. 13 lessons promote faculty discussion on the values, attitudes, and behaviors of Christian teachers. As teachers, you are also God's gift, his messenger of grace and peace. And just as Jesus taught a diverse group of followers with a wide range of personalities, so you face the challenge of teaching students with a broad range of backgrounds, abilities, interests, and learning styles. Use these studies to meditate on his guidance that you might bring the light of his love to shine in the hearts of your students.



Am I Called to Be a Missionary?

Northwestern Publishing House / #388064 / \$5.00 each

Developed by a WELS pastor-principal team to prepare the first-year faculty of a new, out-reach-focused urban school, this set of six lessons provides Christian teachers opportunities to reflect on the power of God's Word for equipping teachers in their roles as missionaries to their communities.



Presentation on Children's Ministry Models

In November, CYD Administrator, Dr. Joel Nelson, will give a sectional on children's ministries at a multi-congregation workshop. Part of the presentation will focus on new and innovative approaches that are being tried in WELS congregations. If you are doing some exciting things that are being well received, please share your story with Dr. Nelson, so he can share it with others. If you know of others who are doing so, pass on their names. Email: joel.nelson@sab.wels.net.

Great Ideas From Great Teachers

What's going on at your church? Please share with us your "great ideas" (strengthening teachers, children, and families, teaching, community outreach, etc.) in your Sunday school. We would love to share them with our readers. Each future issue (as space allows) we will feature ideas submitted to the CYD office. Send your ideas to us via snail mail (WELS-CYD, 2929 N. Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398) or email (cyd@sab.wels.net).

Teaching the Teacher

Instead of asking questions after telling the Bible story, explain that you will be leaving the room and returning in the role of a new student who doesn't know anything about the Bible. The class will have to tell you the lesson they have just heard. It can be a fun way to provide variety to your lessons. Be sure that the teacher returns to develop the truth and application for the lesson.

Outdoor Bubble Bonanza

Sunday school is the best place to be on Sunday morning (besides church, that is). To reinforce that message, gather youth students and teachers outdoors with a bottle of liquid soap and bubble wands. Produce bottle labels with "Sunday school makes me bubbly" on a printer. Be sure to include the church name and address. After everyone has had their fill of blowing bubbles, encourage children to take the bottles home so parents and friends find out about your Sunday school. Your church may find this a neat thing to give to first-time attendees.

Felt Angel Ornament

Need an ornament for a Christmas project? Try this one!

Materials needed:

white felt	flesh colored felt	1" wooden bead
paint	doll hair	stuffing
small ribbon roses	gold buttons (stars, hearts)	gold thread for hanging
gold wedding ring accessories		gold Pen to make designs or messages.

- Directions:**
- 1) Cut two pieces from white felt for body, stitching up three sides, and stuffing.
 - 2) Gather top with thread and pull tight.
 - 3) Cut arms from white felt, hands and feet from flesh felt.
 - 4) Paint face on wooden ball, glue hair to top of head.
 - 5) Glue head to the top of the body.
 - 6) Glue a hand to an arm piece, glue arms to the body.
 - 7) Glue feet to the bottom of the body.
 - 8) Glue button between the hands.
 - 9) Glue rose to the neck.
 - 10) Use Bow wings or purchased wings and glue to the back of the body.
 - 11) Glue ring to the back of the head.
 - 12) Fold thread in half and knot—glue knot to the back of the head.



Only At Sunday School!

Creative responses to teachers' questions:

Q: Which servant of God was the most flagrant lawbreaker in the Bible?

A: **Moses. He broke all 10 Commandments at once.**

Q: Which area of Palestine was especially wealthy?

A: **The area around Jordan. The banks were always overflowing.**

Q: Who is the greatest baby-sitter mentioned in the Bible?

A: **David. He rocked Goliath to a very deep sleep.**

Q: Which Bible character has no parents?

A: **Joshua, son of Nun.**



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Sunday School Talk (SST)

Some folks are using the SST discussion board on the CYD website (www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship). There are 14 different topics. Here was one recent exchange...

Robert: *I'm looking for coloring pictures for 3-5 year olds, and also craft ideas for the same age group to use for my Sunday School class. I would really appreciate anything that I could just print off the internet. I only have 1 to 3 children in my class, so I really don't want to buy a lot of books. Thanks to anyone who can help me.*

Pam: *Here are a couple of options. Watch for coloring books that grant the purchaser the right to reproduce the pages for classroom use. That way you need only buy one book to use as a copy master. These types of books usually have "Reproducible" somewhere on the front cover.*

Also, if you did an internet search for "free Bible Story Coloring pages" you will get a list of sites that have free pages to print or download. As with all Sunday School helps, it is important to make sure that any pictures you use do not add inaccurate or unbiblical elements to the Bible lesson.

Cara: *This is what I use for coloring pages for ages 3 to 5. I go [online] and find an appropriate picture that may relate to the Theme, Aim, Truth, or Memory Treasure. Then I change the image to a black and white picture or grayscale. Then type out what the picture related to, as well as the memory treasure. This way when their parents see the picture or hang it up, the family will hear and see the memory verse to help memorize it for the next Sunday. It is amazing what you can find "free" on the internet.*

Please contact us with any questions or for further information.

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