



Partners

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

What Did You Learn in School Today?

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

When you were a child and came home from school, invariably, there would be one question asked you by your mom or dad. In fact, this question is probably the most asked after-school question of all children everywhere. The question: “What did you learn in school today?” This universal, after-school question, has an equally universal answer: “Nothing.”

Both the parents that ask the universal after-school question and the kids that give the universal “nothing” answer, know that that answer is not accurate by a long shot. We are *always* learning something. From the first gulps of breath at birth to our last gasps for breath at death, we are learning.

People who are learning, whether young or old, are like branches on a plant—growing, spreading, reaching, climbing, changing. How much and how well the branches grow, however, depends on the main plant and the support and nourishment it provides the branches.

Jesus understands how important the main plant is to the branches. The Scripture text below places the plant-branch picture in our minds, and Jesus uses it to teach us a fundamental truth about being his disciples.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”

In these words, Jesus, the Master Discippler, reminds us that being his disciples means that we have to be firmly connected to him. And we do this through the faithful use of the Means of Grace, the Word and Sacraments. When we stay connected to Christ through the Means of Grace, we will bear much fruit – not might, not can, but WILL!

Evangelist D. L. Moody told a story about a picture he had seen that impressed him greatly and illustrated the idea of being connected to Christ. The picture portrayed a woman grasping a cross firmly with both hands as she was being



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rescued from a stormy sea. Moody would later tell how that picture lost much of its impact after he saw another picture. In the second picture, a woman was also being rescued from raging waters. But while clinging with one hand to the cross, her other hand was lifting another person out of the waves to safety.

That second picture dramatically portrays the lesson the Master Disciple, Jesus, wants us to learn. When we, in faith, firmly grab onto him and all he has done for us, we are then given the strength and courage to reach out and grab onto others so they too can become Christ's disciples.

In a world that's becoming increasingly dangerous, paranoid, and uncertain, it is vital that those of us who have the saving, calming, absolute truth, share it with others—help others crawl out of the raging waters of their uncertainty and unbelief and grab onto Jesus as firmly as we have.

The Master Disciple says, "I am the vine, you are the branches." What a privilege to be a Sunday school teacher who is used by the Holy Spirit to help children and their parents grab on to Jesus! Let's be good disciples. Let's be strong branches that bear abundant fruit. Let's reach out to others so they can become branches with us on the life-giving, life-saving vine of Jesus.

Support Your Public School Parents



Many (perhaps most) children who attend WELS Sunday schools, attend public schools during the week. Why not support these students and their families by reminding everyone in your congregation and staff to pray for the schools in your community? Perhaps you could even post/share individual schools' names, principals' names, teachers' names, etc. so prayers could be more specific. Letting your public school parents know that your Sunday school ministry is asking God to watch over their children's schools, administrators, teachers, etc., would be a great way to show how much you care for these families.

Also, why not try to better connect your church families who have children in the same public schools but maybe do not realize it? Put out a sign-up sheet with each local school's name on it, and ask parents to sign up under the appropriate school. When everyone has had a chance to sign up, figure out ways to get these "same school" families connected with each other at church for

Bible study, Christian education topics, discussions about parenting concerns, fellowship activities, etc.

So often, especially if your congregation has its own Lutheran elementary school, member families whose children attend public schools feel marginalized and almost like "second class" members of the congregation. Do whatever you can to communicate to these families that they are valuable and loved members of the Body of Christ and your church family.

Join the Live Chat

Connect with Sunday school teachers from all over WELS!

Tuesday

June 12, 2007

8:00-9:00 p.m. Central time

Join us in a live chat on the topic . . .

**Done with This Year, Getting Ready for Next:
Sharing Sunday School Stories and Strategies**

Go to www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship and enter the chat via the special link and icon on the Youth Discipleship home page.

Family Friendly Sunday School - Part 2

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

Is your Sunday school family friendly? In the last issue, six factors were given to help you think about it. Here is a quick review: 1) Teachers and parents are partners. 2) Decisions are made with the children in mind. 3) Parents and teachers visibly work together. 4) Parents and teachers share Christian education standards and values. 5) The pastor and superintendent model family friendliness. 6) The Sunday school faculty constantly communicates. What follows are seven more factors that can help make your Sunday school more family friendly.

- In a family friendly Sunday school, **parents volunteer** to help with Sunday school and enjoy what they are doing. They help as teacher aids, bring snacks, make crafts, plan family nights. The pastor, superintendent, teachers, and parent leaders deliberately manage volunteer involvement to respect the time commitments of all family members.
- In a family friendly Sunday school, **teachers care** about the children and their entire families. Teachers pray for family members who are ill, listen actively as children talk about their brothers' or sisters' accomplishments, and write notes or visit parents to express concern when a family crisis has taken place.
- In a family friendly Sunday school, children are **excited about the Sunday school** and want to be there. They are excited because their classrooms are bright and cheery places. Parents and/or grandparents can visit classrooms. Lessons are taught with enthusiasm and expertise. Classmates get along and have fun.
- In a family friendly Sunday school, the pastor, superintendent, and teachers know that children come from an array of family styles - traditional families, blended families, sandwich families, minimal function families, dysfunctional families, non-communicative families, single-parent families, and many other unique varieties.

The Sunday school staff is sensitive and empathetic to the various needs of these families. Their actions display this sensitivity and empathy. They do not make children feel inferior or superior based on their **family structure**.

- In a family friendly Sunday school, families have **confidential** access to the pastor, superintendent, and/or teachers when it's needed.
- In a family friendly Sunday school, the Sunday school offers significant programming which brings members of **individual families and the whole Sunday school family together**. Examples of these programs include fun fairs, family dinners, Family Olympics, family movie nights, and the like.
- In a family friendly Sunday school, teachers clearly, yet sensitively teach **God's design** and will use Holy Scripture.



The above is adapted from "The Family Ministry of Lutheran Schools" 1998, by the Department of School Ministry for the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

Only At Sunday School!



An overconfident, rookie Sunday school teacher asked his class, "Why would people look at me and think I am a Christian?"

A child in the back looked up and answered, "Because they don't know you?"

Make Use of Available Resources

by *Carlene Boldt – St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, WI*

I admit it—I enjoy going to seminars and workshops. I love learning new things—whether they are things to enrich my personal life, my work life, or as ideas to use in my fourth grade Sunday school class. If I go through a day of my life feeling I haven't learned anything new that day, it was a wasted day.

I enjoy my fourth graders in Sunday school so much this year. Because I feel I have a great class, I'm always looking for things to enrich my lessons, to make my classes more enjoyable to the students. I think I know most of the Christian book stores in the Milwaukee area pretty well and keep my eyes peeled for inexpensive, but meaningful, awards for team challenge winners, birthday cards and "gifts," and lesson remembrances.

But even more important than the "things," I enjoy looking for seminars that will help me become a better teacher to reach those students with learning problems or those who may not want to be in Sunday school in the first place. I want to make the best use of the talents God has given me. As I teach my students their main reason for being put on earth by God is to spread his Word to all, so too I believe that is my purpose.

The last couple of years I have been attending seminars in children's ministry put on by a local non-denominational church. This church has an excellent children's ministry, a large lay ministry trained to work with children, and a huge church plant to accommodate training large groups. My pastor is aware that I go to these seminars.

For \$15 (early registration—being late will cost you \$25) I attended a workshop on a Friday evening with a dessert. This year's dessert was chocolate fountains with all types of fruits, cookies, and marshmallows to dip in. Perfect for the month of February.

The Friday seminar was on "Teaching the Story, and Teaching It Right." All teachers in these sessions are Christians (no evolution, no abortion) and a discerning WELS Chris-

tian who knows his/her Bible can glean a lot of information from these seminars. The Saturday seminars were wonderful. You could attend three; however, if you wanted to skip lunch, you could squeak in another workshop. These sessions were great! One was on classroom management, taught by a certified teacher who is now a Director of Children's Ministries at another large Christian church. It was great and I could have sat another hour listening to her. Such a motivator! And she directed us to a Web site with further information on managing your classroom in love.

A workshop on family events and a great workshop on making old stories come alive (games, experiments, and crafts) rounded out my Saturday. Of course, I didn't skip lunch—a large Cousin's sub (3 kinds to choose from), chips, soda/water, and a chocolate chip cookie. All this for \$15! What a deal!

Everyone received a 20% off coupon at the Garden of Readin' Bookstore on the church campus. I walked away with posters fitting the lessons being taught this year and three books with reproducible worksheets that I think my class will enjoy.

Although I attended one keynote address, I skipped the rest to spend time in the bookstore. The best thing of all—I left this educational experience still a Wisconsin Synod Lutheran, but one that had more ideas to use in my Sunday school classroom.

I encourage all teachers of our Lord's sheep and lambs to continue their education by attending available workshops. It's good to learn from the experts. But be very discerning. Hold what you see and hear up to the light of God's Word. Ask your pastor if you are in doubt about going. When you go, you will find your motivation for teaching God's Word renewed.

Carlene Boldt teaches 4th grade Sunday school at St. Paul's Lutheran Church-Muskego, WI.

Glad I Can Still Receive It!

Dear WELS Youth Discipleship:

I am not teaching Sunday school right now due to some health and family issues, but I was told I could keep getting the [Partners] newsletter that I really love. You have some excellent helps in this publication. Glad I can still receive it!

Lynne M. Wozniak - Weyauwega, WI

Lessons That Leave a Better Taste in Your Students' Mouths and Minds

by Carlene Boldt – St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Muskego, WI

Find it difficult at times to come up with ideas that fit in with the Sunday School lessons you teach? You are not the only one! I need something new, something different that I know my students will enjoy because it's a motivation for me to really get into a lesson. But there are many times when I'm just not inspired, I'm running out of time, or, let's admit it, I'm too tired to think. It's time to turn to some of my workbooks chock full of ideas.

The Good Book Cookbook

by Becky White

Carson-Dellosa Publishing Company, Inc., 1984

Order number: 31-5341 Cost: \$9.99

Available at Northwestern Publishing House (1-800-662-6022)

A great book of ideas with 60 quick and easy recipes for teaching Bible lessons. You fill two loves of kids from one book—food and Bible knowledge. Although the recipes can be geared to children of almost any grade level, these ideas probably work best in grades 3-5. Although these ideas are touted as quick and easy, I did not find this to be entirely true. Please try everything at home first to avoid having a disaster in your class.

These ideas fit in perfectly with the Christ Light® lessons we are teaching. The book is in color, uses NIV Scripture references, teaching tips, and closing prayers. It also gives some ideas for additional fun with the lesson.

The star cookies were actually something I came up with before I bought the book. Simply make white sugar cookies and frost and decorate them. Perfect remembrance of God's promise to Abraham that his offspring would be as numerous as the stars. Students thought they were great and they still remember God's promise to Abraham.

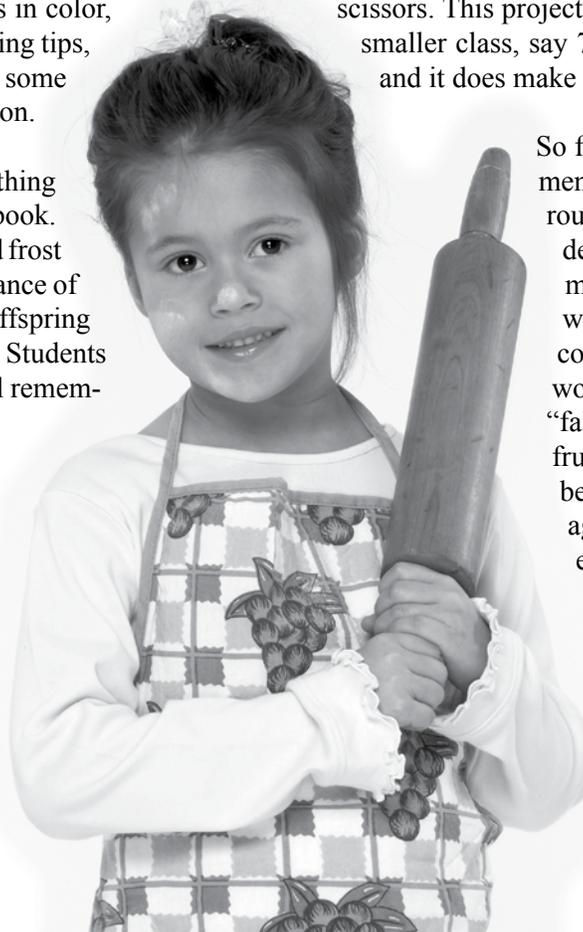
Straw and Mud Brick Candy was a little more messy and difficult. The candy was to represent the bricks the Israelites were forced to make while in slavery in Egypt. I made a batch at home and kept them in the refrigerator to harden. Then we made a batch in class. The students enjoyed playing the role of slaves, adding the pre-measured ingredients and taking turns with the stirring. Then they formed little bricks

out of the mixture. Great learning tool—and they didn't taste bad either.

Our lesson on God providing food for the Israelites in the wilderness had me making Sweet Manna and Marshmallow Quail. The quail were of large marshmallows and the manna was of Frosted Flakes cereal with white chocolate drizzled over it. The students said the quail were so "cute." Cutting the marshmallows to look like birds helps if you are near cold water to constantly wash the marshmallow off the scissors. This project wouldn't be bad at all if you have a smaller class, say 7-10 students. I have 21 in my class and it does make for a long evening.

So far the most difficult was Commandment Cookie Tablets, made with white round sugar cookies that you were to decorate with words from the commandments. I was lucky to get the word "God" on some cookies—the cookies just weren't big enough for words like "parents," "Sabbath," or "false witness." I ended up extremely frustrated and resorting to using numbers. I probably will not use that idea again, unless I can come with an easier way to do this.

There are several more ideas in this book I plan to try next year with upcoming lessons. You do get some cute ideas from this book. I give this book a rating of 3 out of 5.



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Great Teaching Ideas

What's in a Name?

Help your students get to know each other faster in the fall with this activity. Give each child a piece of tag board cut to about 12x4 inches. Have markers, crayons, and colored pencils available. If your room has access to a computer, go to www.babynames.com. If you don't have a computer, bring some baby names books to class. Have students find what their name means and then write their name and its meaning below it on the tag board. Allow students to decorate their name cards as they wish and then have each student present his/her name to the class. This will help your students get to know each other better right from the start.

If you'd like to have one of your ideas considered for publishing in *Partners*, send it to us via e-mail: cyd@sab.wels.net or by surface mail: WELS-CYD, 2929 N. Mayfair Road, Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398.

This Will Never Work!

What do you say/do when a parent or fellow Sunday school staff member complains or gripes? Try the following:

- Kindly challenge them to find a better solution. Say, "You seem to feel strongly about this. Maybe you have a better way to do it. What do you suggest?"
- Kindly challenge them to get involved if they desire more input. Say, "Why don't you join the Sunday school ministry team. Then you'd be an active player in what gets decided."
- Kindly encourage them to share how and what they'd change. If what they say makes good sense, say, "Your ideas were right on target. Here's how I think we can partner together to make things better."

Please contact us with any questions or for further information.