



Partners

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

Got Stress? Get Still!

by Joel A. Nelson, Administrator – WELS Youth Discipleship

Have you ever been to a stress management workshop? If not, do you think you'd like to go to one? I went to one once. In that workshop, as in most stress management workshops, some basic questions get answered: What is stress? How do we react to stress? How can we manage stress appropriately?

One question these workshops do not cover, however, is, "How can we get rid of stress?" That question is never posed because getting rid of stress—eliminating it from our lives, is, on the one hand impossible, and on the other hand unhealthy. Can you believe that? The experts tell us that we need to have stress in our lives in order to function.

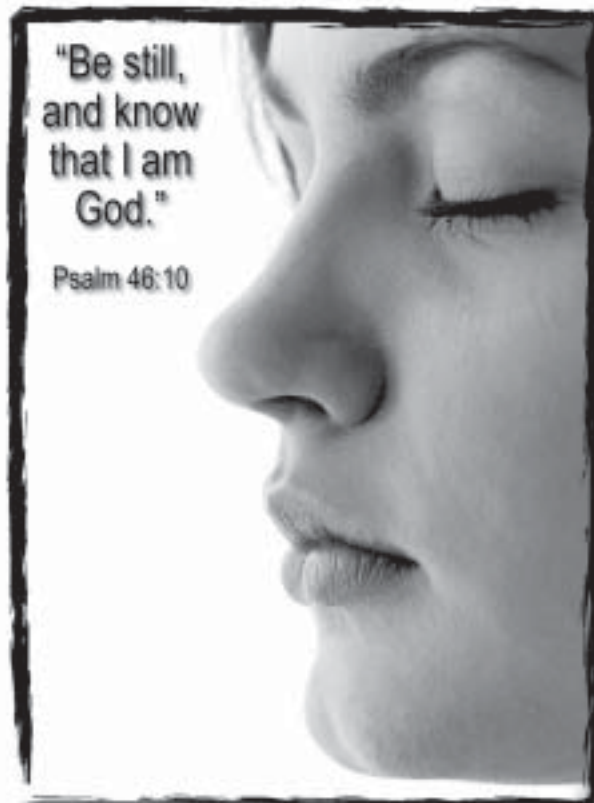
I just celebrated 26 years in public ministry. As we all know, ministry at all levels can be stressful at times. As I review my ministry life, I can illustrate some of the stresses by simply recalling single sentences that were said to me.

When I was assigned to be a principal and teach 7-8th grades, fresh out of Martin Luther College, the sentence that brought

a fair amount of stress to my five year ministry there was what the Board of Education chairman said to me before my very first Board of Education meeting. He pulled me aside and calmly said, "Nelson, I just want you to know that if you make one mistake here, we'll nail you to the wall." I did not ask him what he meant, because I recall excusing myself to go use the bathroom.

At my second call, where I started a school and taught all eight grades for seven years, the single sentence that best illustrates the stresses of that call were also spoken to me by members of the Board of Education, all of whom had graduate degrees in engineering, physics, computer science, and even meteorology. These highly educated men said to me, a guy with five years of experience under my belt, "Mr. Nelson, as we launch this new school, we'll really be looking to you, and relying on you because, you are the expert." I recall thinking,

"Yeah, right!" but then realized they were dead serious. I excused myself to use the bathroom.



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The New Kids' Connection

Does your congregation subscribe to WELS *Kids' Connection*? Does your Sunday school watch the monthly episodes? If you don't now, you will definitely want to this year! In addition to all new episodes, there will be a new look, logo, music, theme song, teen hosts, and even a website <www.kidsconnection.tv>. And much of this is the result of the surveys some of you completed.

Most of the new twists you will see in September, but the new teen hosts will not be "revealed" until the October episode. This is because we are using the September episode as a tribute to the late Chris Jagodzinski, *Kids' Connection* host for the past several years. Chris's mom and fellow *Kids' Connection* host, Julia, will present their touching remembrances of Chris. In October the new hosts will be unveiled and we will tell you about the process we used to audition more than 85 WELS teens from six different states. It was an amazing display of talented WELS youth interested in sharing Jesus with others.

It costs CYD about \$50,000 per year to produce *Kids' Connection*. Currently, about \$25,000 is raised via subscriptions, so the CYD budget underwrites the difference. If we are going to keep *Kids' Connection* going and growing, we need more subscriptions and would also gladly accept any additional offerings you or your Sunday school students would care to make.

You can order *Kids' Connection* from the Commission on Youth Discipleship <cyd@sab.wels.net> or call 414-256-3274. A one-year subscription is \$80.00 plus \$5.00 shipping and handling and gets you nine awesome episodes to help your students and you, "Stay connected to Jesus."

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After that, I was called to a 2500 member congregation to be its first family minister and the second staff minister in all of WELS-world at the time. The sentence that sent my stress-o-meter into the red zone was uttered by the senior pastor who also happened to be a synodical officer at the time. He said, "Joel, no one has ever done what we are asking you to do. You will be charting new territory and many other WELS congregations will be looking to us as a model." I had not yet learned where the bathrooms were, so I just swallowed hard and nodded gravely. I could cite other examples, but those three help to make the point.

Yes, there are stresses in ministry, and there are stresses in every aspect of life on this sin-filled earth. You all can share your own personal and ministerial stress stories. You all also can think of single phrases or words that trigger the stress-o-meter in your minds. That send you immediately into 911 mode.

At these times, be reminded of another single sentence that has, for me—a sometimes hyper, mostly task centered, critically analytic personality—become one of my favorite passages from the Bible. It is Psalm 46 verse 10: "Be still, and know that I am God."

When everything around us seems to be spinning out of control, God comes to us and says, "Be still, be quiet, shhhhh." Turn to my Word and the Sacraments and be reminded that I am in control, that I love you, that I will never take you where my unconditional love for you in Christ can't keep you. When our own personal thoughts, emotions, and feelings, make us dizzy with doubt and dread, God comes to us and says, "Be still, be quiet, shhhh." Turn to my Word and the Sacraments and be reminded that I have kept and always will keep my promises. And the greatest promise I have made and kept for you is that someday you will be with me in heaven."

Life on earth can be stressful. Sin and Satan make sure of that. But what a blessing stress is, for it helps to remind Christians that earth is not what it's all about. Because of Jesus, there is a better place waiting for us where perfect peace abounds forever and ever.

And the more personally we believe that, the more willing we will be to share this Good News with all those stressed people around us who do not yet know Jesus and the peace he brings.

Beginning another year of Sunday school ministry can be stressful in positive and negative ways. Cope better this year by taking the words of Psalm 46:10 to heart: "Be still, and know that I am God." Be still, be quiet, shhhh. Trust that God is there with you, for you, and in you. Then have a wonderful year!



Great Ideas from Great Teachers



The Four G's of Teaching

Grab my attention! Make me curious so I want to stay engaged.

Give me something! Don't lecture me. Do something interactive. Keep me involved.

Get something out of me. Have me apply my knowledge in some way.

Go make a difference. Help me to do something important with my new knowledge.

One of the objectives of Partners is to communicate and to share teaching ideas, tips, and helps with Sunday school teachers, superintendents, and pastors. Each issue (as space allows) we will feature ideas submitted to the CYD office. Send your ideas to us via email <cyd@sab.wels.net> or by surface mail (WELS-CYD, 2929 N. Mayfair Rd, Milwaukee, WI 53222-4398).

Jigsaw Puzzle Craft Ideas

Have you ever wondered what to do with jigsaw puzzles where there are one or more pieces missing? Here are three ideas submitted by Jan Koepsell, Living Word, Montrose, CO:

- 1) For the youngest children, make a hole in the top of a puzzle piece with a finishing nail and thread dental floss or string through the hole long enough so that when the ends are tied, the child can slip it over his head. Decorate the front of the piece with a sticker or other media.
- 2) For older children, cut out a poster board cross. Have them glue puzzle pieces to the cross and (optional) decorate the center of the cross with small artificial flowers. A hole could be punched into the top of the cross, and yarn used for a hanger.
- 3) For the oldest students, glue a picture (Sunday service bulletin covers work great) onto a piece of poster board, leaving a 1" border all around the picture. Punch two holes through the poster board at top and attach a yarn hanger. Make a "frame" by gluing puzzle pieces all around the border.

This idea came from an anonymous source – it works! Take all those jigsaw puzzle pieces and spray paint them green (both sides). When dry, glue together in circle form to make a wreath (3-5 inches in diameter). When the glue is dry, take

some thin red ribbon, make a bow and attach it to either the bottom or top of your "wreath." Red beads may be added as berries.

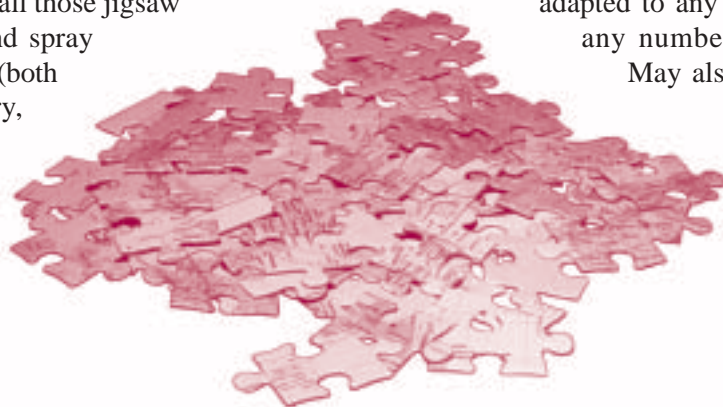
Concentration

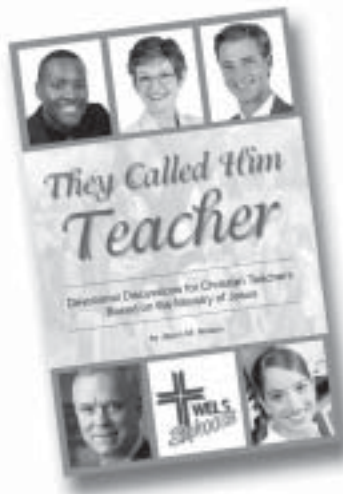
Instead of matching the same word, this version of Concentration matches relating pairs. For example: He wrote the first five books of the Bible...to be matched with Moses. Or, the number of books in the Bible...to be matched with 66. The matching pairs are written on index cards.

To begin the game, all cards are turned face down and placed in rows on the middle of the table. Instead of individuals players, teams are used. One team begins by turning over two cards, one at a time. If the cards match, they keep the cards and draw again. If there is no match, the cards are turned face down and the other team takes a turn. The children on each team take a turn by flipping over the cards one at a time. They may get help from their team members if one remembers where a match might be. The game is over when all of the cards have been matched. Count each team's cards to determine the winner.

This is a good way to test the knowledge of the children and can be used as a review of stories taught in class. This game is easily adapted to any grade level using any number of game cards. May also vary the degree of difficulty with the matches.

(Submitted by Aletha Gerken, Divinity, St. Paul, MN)





They Called Him Teacher: An Exciting New Resource!

by Bruce Becker, WELS Parish Services Administrator

Jesus once told his followers: “A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40).

You are a teacher, a Christian teacher. What a special gift of the Spirit! What an awesome privilege from God! To have the opportunity to teach others about the one thing needful is one of the most cherished joys any Christian can have.

Every teacher is first a student. Every Christian teacher is first and foremost a student of Jesus. We learn of Jesus to teach others about him. Yet, learning of Jesus isn't just about book knowledge. Learning of Jesus touches our heart and will and leads us to action. In the same way, teaching isn't just about imparting knowledge to others. It includes shaping the attitude of the heart and helping students develop life-long habits and skills.

This series of devotional discussions is for you, a student of Christ and a teacher for Christ. Recognize that you will never be the perfect teacher that Jesus was. You will never know all that he knows. You will never see all that he sees. You will never do all that he does. You will never be above your Teacher, but you can be like your Teacher.

Each devotional discussion in this series will lead you to reflect deeply upon the practices of the Master Teacher, Jesus. Sit now at his feet. Learn from him. Ponder his practice. Contemplate his care and concern. Love as he loved. Live as he lived. Teach as he taught. For, they called him, Teacher.

***They Called Him Teacher* would be excellent for your Sunday school staff meetings. Order one for each of your staff members. Order from www.nph.net
Item Number: #38-8063
Price: \$3.00 (+ shipping)**

Resource Recommendations

Making a Difference by: Margaret Rickers Hinchey

Collection of 20 stand-alone studies on practical topics you'll encounter as a teacher — such as active learning, varying your presentation style, involving students during lessons, and much more. Ideal for individuals or groups, each short study consists of two reproducible pages. Make a difference in your students' lives by helping them learn!

Item Number: OL-153722 **Price:** \$10.99
Papercover / 46 pages / Order from <www.nph.net> or call 1-800-662-6022

Basic Teacher Skills by: Richard E. Rusbult

Today's generations - children, youth and adults - present unprecedented challenges and opportunities in teaching-learning contexts. Today's new teachers need special assistance as they face their first class session or consider church school teaching as their ministry. This book provides a solid foundation of skills needed to meet these new challenges.

Item Number: OL-153747 **Price:** \$12.00
Papercover / 139 pages / Order from <www.nph.net> or call 1-800-662-6022

TLC Teaching: Practical Ways to Reach Each Student by: Dave Ebeling

This book examines the educational process by looking at the teacher, the learner, and the content (TLC). Half of the book gives 375 ideas for teachers to use and eight ways to adapt teaching strategies. This book could be used by any Sunday school or VBS teacher, as well as any parent home schooling. The chapters are well-written and would be helpful to anyone involved in ministry to children.

Item Number: OL-154159 **Price:** \$12.99
Papercover / 62 pages / Order from <www.nph.net> or call 1-800-662-6022



Check It Out!

Partners Newsletter

If you know someone who would benefit from receiving this newsletter, please contact the CYD office. If you would like to continue receiving this newsletter in the future, do nothing; however, if you would like to stop receiving it, contact the CYD office (414) 256-3274 or email <cyd@sab.wels.net>. Contact the CYD office for address changes and/or your Sunday school staff changes.

I Had No Idea!

[I have] been a member of the WELS my whole life, and a SS teacher over the past 10 years, I had no idea what great resources and discussion groups are available through the CYD website <www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship>. I will be printing out index cards for my students, including the website address, and highlight areas they might want to use. I will also share this with our SS coordinator & other teachers.

Lisa Leege, St. James Lutheran Church-Prairie Du Sac, WI

Bible Stories, Quizzes, and Games

The WELS Youth Discipleship website contains 28 different Bible stories that have an accompanying quiz and/or game with them. Go to <www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship>. Click on the collection, "Just for Youth" and then open the "Just for Kids" folder. You'll find some great resources to use with or recommend to your students!

Tell us what you think...

What resources or helps do you need most when it comes to your Sunday school ministry? Email us your thoughts: <cyd@sab.wels.net>

Need to Find a Previous Article or Idea?

Past *Partners* Content can be found at <www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship>. Look in "Consultation and

Resources" then "Sunday School Ministry Resources" then "Newsletter-Partners Archive". Or you can go directly to the archive at:

<http://www.askpublishing.com/partners_archive/>

Plan Early, Get the Good Seats!

The Western Wisconsin District Commission on Youth Discipleship has planned a one day conference for Sunday school teachers and superintendents for Saturday, January 22, 2005. The theme of this one day conference will be "Stewards of Our Faith, Pass It On - At Home, Church, and in the Community." The event will be held at St. John's Lutheran School, Baraboo, Wisconsin. The 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. event offers a keynote speaker, four training sessions, and five discussion groups. The cost is \$10 per person. Included in this fee is a light lunch. For information, contact Jerry Kastens at 920-261-3511 or email <trinityminister@charter.net>.

How Are You Reaching Out?

Like some other statistics in WELS, Sunday school enrollments have been declining. In 2000, total enrollment throughout WELS was 37,557 children. In 2001, it was 36,425. Sunday school enrollment in 2002 was 35,215, and in 2003 it was 34,619 (2004 data is not in yet).

Several things factor into this, and it is not a cause for panic. After all, God is in control.

The downward trend, however, is a cause for concern. The trend needs reversing. Over the next several issues *Partners* would like to share what you are doing in your ministry settings to turn things around. Please email us

with some of the things you have been doing/trying to reach more children and families for Jesus. Email: <cyd@sab.wels.net>. THANKS!



Only At Sunday School!

A nursery school teacher told her class about the great blessing from God our country is. "We can be thankful to God that we live in such a great country," she said. "One of the greatest blessings we have in this country, is that we are all free."

One little boy came walking up to her from the back of the room. He stood with his hands on his hips and said, "I'm not free. I'm four."



Partners

Prayer for Inner Peace

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy,
Whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could destroy,
Be there at our waking, and give us, we pray,
Your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

Lord of all eagerness, Lord of all faith,
Whose strong hands were skilled at the plane and the lathe,
Be there at our labors, and give us, we pray,
Your strength in our hearts, Lord, at the noon of the day.

Lord of all kindness, Lord of all grace,
Your hands swift to welcome, your arms to embrace,
Be there at our homing, and give us, we pray,
Your love in our hearts, Lord, at the eve of the day.

Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm,
Whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm,
Be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray,
Your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.



... Jan Struther (1901-1953)

Please contact us with any questions or for further information.

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