

Partners



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

The Way They Should Go

by Joel A. Nelson, WELS Youth Discipleship Administrator

Probably the most quoted Bible passage to support the value of Christian education for children is Proverbs 22:6, "Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not turn from it." Recently I was reading excerpts from a book called, *Touching Hearts, Changing Lives: Becoming a Treasured Teacher* by Jody Capehart (Group Publishing 1999). In one excerpt I encountered something I have never really thought of before relative to Proverbs 22:6. Capehart talked about the phrase, "in the way he should go," and indicated that these words literally mean, "according to his way." She went on to say that when this passage is viewed like this, it can be an encouragement to parents and teachers to discern the individuality and special strengths that God has given each of his children.

The C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (1970) *Commentaries on the Old Testament-Proverbs of Solomon* adds this about the meaning of Proverbs 22:6, "The instruction of youth, the education of youth, ought to be conformed to the nature of youth; the matter of instruction, the manner of instruction, ought to regulate itself according to the stage of life, and its peculiarities; the method ought to be arranged according to the degree of development which the mental and bodily life of the youth has arrived at" (pg.86-87).

While the main point of Proverbs 22:6 is a spiritual one, encouraging parents and others to direct youth down the path God wants them to take (Ehlke, 2001, *The People's Bible-Proverbs*, pg. 213), the secondary point is valid, and Capehart, Keil, and Delitsch express it. Proverbs 22:6 contains an encouragement to teach our students in

developmentally appropriate ways that best connect with how they learn, using methods that best accommodate how God has gifted each of them.

It's an absolute fact that God's Word has all the power it needs to change hearts, and the Holy Spirit always works through that powerful Word. But 25 years of ministry has moved me to believe, with all my heart, that how we teach God's Word to our children in Sunday school (or related ministries) is extremely important. How we teach God's Word holds the greatest potential for keeping children in Sunday school. I also believe, with all my heart, that the same holds true for the adults in our congregations. How we present God's Word, to students of all ages, has a tremendous impact on how it will be received. Consider whether the following quotes apply to your situation:

"Christian education in a majority of congregations is a tired enterprise in need of reform. Often out of touch with adult and adolescent needs, it experiences

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"Nothing matters more than effective Christian education!"



Check It Out!

by Joel Nelson, CYD Administrator

Title: *Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything at Church and How to Fix It*

Authors: Thom and Joni Schultz

Publisher: Group Publishing, Loveland, CO (1993, 2003)



While the title is a bit irreverent, the book is actually a very thought provoking, positive, and engaging presentation on the educational methods and approaches used in churches and Sunday schools and how to make things better. Here's what others

have said about the book:

"Here's a hard-hitting, provocative evaluation of learning in the church...and practical solutions for improving how your church and Sunday school educate."

"You'll find loads of practical help—step by step plans to help you launch a new revolution of learning in your church."

"Here's a fascinating tour of Christian and cutting-edge secular education models to help any church reinvent its approach to learning."

Chapter titles include: *The Lost Art of Learning in the Church, Know the Goal, Focus on Learning Rather Than Teaching, Concentrate on the Essentials, Emphasize Understanding Over Rote Memorization, Make People Think, and Use Active/Interactive Learning.*

Is every page a slam-dunk-this-is-the-greatest-thing-since-the-Dead-Sea-Scrolls? Nope. But there is a tremendous amount of insight and information in this book that can help you to re-evaluate what's happening in your Sunday school ministry. I would recommend this book to anyone, and encourage Sunday school staffs to get a copy for each of their teachers and discuss its chapters as part of their regular staff development. You can learn more about the book at <www.grouppublishing.org>.

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increasing difficulty in finding and motivating volunteers, faces general disinterest among its 'clients,' and employs models and procedures that have changed little over time" Peter Benson and Carolyn Eklin, Search Institute, 1990.

"Sunday schools [for adults and children] simply do not provide the quality of teaching and experience that people demand these days in exchange for their time" George Barna, Ministry Currents, 1991.

"The teachers just talk and we just sit there" Bryan, Grade 3, Interview with Thom Schultz of Group Publishing, Incorporated, 1992.

Those quotes are real, but are also really negative, so consider this quote:

"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" Peter Benson and Carolyn Eklin, *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of 11,000 Adults and Youth from Protestant Congregations*, Search Institute, 1990.

The seven most important words in the above quote are, "Nothing matters more than effective Christian education!" For effective Christian education – defined as education that presents the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all its truth and purity, and in ways that truly engage those who study it – prepares students for purposeful and fulfilling lives on earth, and most importantly, for glorious and eternal lives in heaven.

Dear partner, as you reflect on this article, and your current calling in Sunday school ministry, honestly ask yourself a couple questions:

- 1) Does my teaching provide the most effective Christian education possible for my dear students?
- 2) Would the parents of my Sunday school students and the students themselves feel that my teaching is the most effective it can be?

If the answer to those questions is, "I really think so," then humbly thank the Lord for the impact he is allowing you to have. Also, do whatever you can to partner with the other members of your Sunday school ministry to improve their effectiveness. If the answer to the questions is, "I really don't think it is," then commit yourself to doing whatever it takes to steadily improve. Becoming a better teacher is a process. The journey to improvement begins with small steps.

Teaching children about Jesus is a joy and privilege. Teaching them "in the way they should go" is an absolute blast, for them and also for you!



What Will Become of the Children?

by Pastor Kurt Loescher,
National Chaplain-Lutheran Pioneers

Look out at a playground and watch the children play. What do you see? You see faces that represent their family heritage. You see bumps, bruises and scrapes. You hear laughter and yelling, playing and fighting. You see hope, but you also see some cause for concern, don't you?

We see boys growing up wondering what they are. They don't always fit in with the sports scene, and they are caught up in a culture that glorifies everything ungodly. Sure their pastors and teachers at church espouse the truth, but is that truth part of the fabric of the adults in their lives? How do they fit in? How can they practice the Christian life they are learning about? We see some boys, whose mothers are Christians and fathers are not, wondering if this Christianity thing is a real man's way of life. We might look so far that we see a church body whose men are increasingly tempted to back away from their God-given role of leadership.

We see our girls confused about what gives them worth. We see some wanting to be athletic. We see them wanting to look good in a cheerleader uniform. We see them wanting to stay with a fashion world that would have them be the object of men's passions. And if they can't shoot a basketball or look good in today's fashions, they see themselves, and are seen by others, as less than worthy. As a pastor, I see some of those same girls light up with hope when they hear how much they are loved by God, and realize some of the beauty that God created in them by faith. Do you see some of the same things?

We see people wringing their hands over the youth not being prepared to take the reins of the church, following instead the perverted patterns of the world. We hear them asking, "What is the church doing about all this?" Of course the better question is: "How are our parents raising their children and what is our church doing to help them?" The

answer must be to continue to preach and teach the gospel faithfully. Continue to teach the law of God clearly so that there is no question what sin is. Then dominate our teaching and preaching with the good news that Jesus has lived and died for us. Make clear that the sinner we were is now dead, and we are alive with Christ. This gospel remains the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes, including our youth.

Beyond faithful preaching and teaching we can only increase the number and variety of opportunities to teach our youth. One opportunity that may never have been utilized in your church or that died years ago, or hasn't really been working for you lately is the Lutheran Pioneer program and the corresponding Lutheran Girl Pioneer program. These programs when given good attention and strong lay leadership can provide men and women who stand along side our parents to give our children yet another Christian mentor.

When used prayerfully these programs also lead our children to explore the gifts that the Lord has given them and develop some of those gifts for service to our Lord. By the way, a side benefit that sometimes happens with these programs comes at campouts and other activities where, in a non-threatening atmosphere, a parent learns for the first time the joy of salvation.

Maybe it's time to dust off that old manual, or better yet, contact the respective national offices. Each of them have people resources with new and exciting ideas for guiding today's youth that when used creatively can work in any setting. You can contact Lutheran Pioneers by phone at 888-214-8225 or by e-mail at <office@lutheranpioneers.org> and Lutheran Girl Pioneers by phone at 608-781-5232 or by e-mail at <lgp@execpc.com>.

Equipping to Share the Joy

The Special Ministries in Lutheran Education (SMILE) III Conference will be held on the campus of Wisconsin Lutheran College, 8800 West Bluemound Road, Milwaukee, WI on July 16-18th, 2004. The theme for the conference is "Equipping to Share the Joy." Watch your mailbox for more information in the coming months. Questions may be directed to Bruce Cuppan at (920) 922-8672 or bnecuppan@excel.net.

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.

Help Is Only A Click Away

The WELS Youth Discipleship website lists over 30 different resources to help you and your Sunday school ministry partners become more effective teachers of God's Word. Go to <www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship>. Click on the collection, "Consultation and Resources" and then "Sunday School Ministry Resources." You'll find some great helps!

Divide and Conquer?

Need a creative way to separate different learning areas and spaces? Take a look at foam! CYD Administrator Nelson was at a meeting in Colorado where the organization used 20"x 20" foam blocks to separate different areas. It was really slick. The blocks were easily moved, reconfigured, and stacked. They also seemed to deaden sound pretty well. The company that provided the block was called Future Foam, Inc. Maybe they have a solution for you and a representative in your area. Go to <www.futurefoam.com>.

Video Helps Teach Singing

Would you like to hear better quality from children singing in your Sunday school or Lutheran elementary school? Check out *Children Singing* <www.shopwels.net>. (Type the title into the search box.) \$19.95.

Kathy Rausch, former WELS teacher with graduate degrees in music education, demonstrates techniques for building tuneful, healthy, and beautiful singing with children. The 90 minute video includes a demonstration choir of children from a mix of ages and abilities, including those who are not "natural singers" and boys with changing voices. Kathy's vision of children singing with beautiful tone and her technical expertise to achieve this vision is an inspiration.

Great Opportunity in a Beautiful Town

WHAT: Sunday School and Youth Ministry Workshop

WHEN: Saturday, February 21, 2004, 8:30 a.m.-2:15 p.m.

WHERE: St. John's Lutheran Church - Frankenmuth, MI.

HOSTS: Michigan District Commission on Youth Discipleship

COST: \$10.00/person covers all materials, plus lunch

LODGING: Group rates at famous Frankemuth hotels

PROGRAM: Keynote address, 8 workshops, NPH and CYD displays, and more!

CONTACT: Rev. James Plocher (989) 823-7923
<jimplocher@tds.net>

Only At Sunday School!



A little girl was talking to her teacher about whales. The teacher said it was physically impossible for a whale to swallow a human because even though it was a very large mammal its throat was very small. The little girl stated that Jonah was swallowed by a whale.

Irritated, the teacher reiterated that a whale could not swallow a human; it was physically impossible. The little girl said, "When I get to heaven I will ask Jonah."

The teacher asked, "What if Jonah went to hell?"

The little girl replied, "Then you ask him."

A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six year olds. After explaining the commandment to honor your Father and your Mother, she asked, "Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?"

Without missing a beat one little boy (the oldest of a family) answered, "Thou shall not kill."

Great Ideas From Great Teachers

by Bob Mateske, CYD Administrative Assistant

PUPPETS

Have you noticed how attentive young children are when you use puppets for telling and retelling the Bible story? Commercial puppets can get very costly. Here are some puppets that children will enjoy just as much as the store bought ones.

Finger Puppets – Draw and cut out small puppets and attach them to your fingers.

Stick Puppets – Stick puppets are easily made by cutting pictures of figures from lessons and attaching them to a craft stick.

White Socks – Put facial features, hair, and clothing on the toe area of a sock.

Paper Sacks – You can draw faces and other features on a small paper sack. Put your hand inside and the character's mouth even moves when you speak.

A Clothespin – Don't use the pinch-type. Glue hair, cloth, beads, and yarn to give each clothespin "character." Stand them up in sand when you tell the Bible story.

Glove Puppets – On a white gardening glove glue pom-poms, one character for each finger. Use beads, felt, and yarn for the faces.

Life-size Puppets – Make life-size puppets by using towels, sheets, and masks. Children enjoy dressing-up like Bible characters and acting out the story.

The CYD website has a special folder on Puppet Ministry in the "Consultation and Resources" Collection.

BEADED CROSS

With the passion and Easter season fast approaching what better way to remind the children of God's love for them by making a beaded cross which may be used as a bookmark, a key chain, backpack ornament, or even as a sun catcher. After teaching the lesson with the theme "Jesus suffered and died to pay for our sins" have the children make a cross which emphasizes the cross in relation to Christ's suffering for our sins.

Cut 10" leather straps (or similar material) for the horizontal pieces of the cross. Fold in half and string 3 beads on the doubled leather strap leaving about ¾" loop. Cut a single leather strap about 2 ¾" or 3" for the cross piece. Place this strap centered between the horizontal strip and glue (Elmer's glue works fine). String five beads on each side of the cross piece and glue. Follow with about 10 beads on the bottom of the horizontal piece. Add a ring if cross will be used as a key chain or backpack ornament. Project took approximately 15 minutes to complete. The beads and leather strips were cut and counted out and placed in individual snack bags beforehand. (Submitted by Joan Jones, St. Paul, Cudahy, WI)

One of the objectives of *Partners* is to communicate and 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).

Stay
Connected
to Jesus!

A great way to help your students stay connected to what's going on in their church body, hear the stories and testimonies of fellow Christians of all ages, and learn more about their Savior and God's Word, is to show them the *WELS Kid's Connection*. The *Kids' Connection* is a video news magazine featuring interesting and spiritually uplifting stories about people, places, and programs around the WELS. *Kids' Connection*, hosted by two energetic WELS teens, is designed for use by Sunday schools and Lutheran elementary schools. A subscription provides you with nine episodes, one for each month of the school or Sunday school year.

The subscription is \$80.00 plus \$5.00 S&H.

To order contact:
cyd@sab.wels.net





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Partners



Date/Place: Fri.-Sun. September 17-19, 2004
 Holiday Inn Select Hotel & Conference Center -
 Naperville, IL (25 miles west of Chicago)

Conference Mission: The WELS National Youth Ministry Conference exists to give WELS called and lay ministers a larger scale opportunity to learn from God's Word, from experts in youth and parenting ministry, and from each other, so that their ministry competence and commitment to Christ grows.

Keynote Presentations:

- ◆ "Building from the Ground Up: The Importance of Parents and Home"
- ◆ "Building an Outreaching Ministry: The Importance of Sharing Jesus with Everyone"
- ◆ "Building a Ministry of Strong Partnerships: The Importance of Working Together"

Sectionals on These Ministry Areas: Parenting, Catechism and Confirmation, Special Needs, Sunday School, VBS, Early Childhood, Teens, Outreach, Christian Camps, Para-Synodical Youth Ministries

Plus: Networking Nooks, Models Sharing, Open Space Discussions, Organization Displays, and the NPH Bookstore

Cost: \$135/person covers everything-lodging, meals, materials...everything! A promotional mailer was sent out in January. Registration materials will come in late spring. Watch for them! Ask your pastor about them.

A special pre-conference workshop and training in "Faith Stepping Stones," the new Wisconsin Lutheran Child and Family Service and Faith Inkubators curriculum for young children and their parents will be offered during the day on Friday, September 17. Workshop cost over and above the WELS Youth Ministry Conference has been REDUCED to: \$89.

*"Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labor in vain."
 ~ Psalm 127:1*

Please contact us with any questions or for further information.

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