



Partners

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



Teach Me to Teach!

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

Out of a whole host of church attributes, church-attenders rank the church's teaching at the bottom of the quality scale. (George Barna, What Americans Believe)

"Christian education opportunities 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)

Only 35% of 5-6th graders say their church classes make them think. (GROUP, Inc. National Survey)

"The teachers just talk and we just sit there." (Grade 3 Student, Interview with GROUP, Inc. Researcher)

Everyone can think of a time when they were bored-out-of-their-gourd by some teacher's "lesson." If you are honest, you may even recall a time when you, as a teacher, were the gourd borer! When it comes to teaching in the church, lousy lessons should not occur.

In my 30 years of ministry, a lot of it spent in developing teaching staffs (Lutheran elementary schools, Sunday schools, vacation Bible schools), the greatest need always seemed to be helping the staff become better teachers of God's Word. Yes, it was vitally important that the staff understood the spiritual aims and truths of their Bible lessons. Yes, it was vitally important to distinguish the Law and Gospel in the lesson. Yes, it was vitally important that all teachers mined the pearls from *Franzmann's Commentary*. But what teachers most needed and wanted, it seemed to me, was to learn how to become better teachers. "Teach me how to teach," was the repeated plea.

Teaching teachers how to teach must be a primary focus for all Sunday school staff meetings. What's interesting

with this focus is that as people learn to become better teachers, some common teaching troubles diminish: lack of discipline in the classroom, students not paying attention or not participating, lack of enjoyment with teaching, lack of patience with children, etc. Becoming a better teacher holds the key to improving many things.

There are many resources that can help you become a better teacher. Several are offered at Northwestern Publishing House (www.nph.net):

- *The Word of Life Comes to Life* (WELS CYD)
Video-assisted course that helps teachers see why they should teach God's Word well, how children learn best, where children learn best, and shares advice from nationally recognized experts.
- *They Called Him Teacher* (Nelson)
Devotional discussions that lead teachers to reflect deeply upon the practices of the Master Teacher, Jesus.

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- ***Making a Difference***

(Hinchey)

Twenty stand-alone studies on practical topics teachers encounter-such as active learning, varying your presentation style, involving students during lessons, and much more.

Other Christian-based resources:

- ***The Way They Learn***

(Tobias - AppLe St. Books)

This book helps teachers to discover and teach to children's strengths.

- ***Touching Hearts, Changing Lives***

(Capehart - Group, Inc.)

This book shares an overview of basic skills every teacher needs plus practical tips from successful teachers.

- ***Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything at Church***

(Schultz - Group, Inc.)

This book provides a tour of Christian and cutting-edge secular education models to help the church reinvent its approach to learning.

- ***Basic Teacher Skills***

(Rusbult - Judson Press)

This book provides a solid foundation of skills needed to meet the teaching-learning challenges and opportunities of students today.

- ***TLC Teaching: Practical Ways to Reach Each Student***

(Ebeling - Concordia)

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.

Twenty great mini-courses are offered on WELS.net University (www.wels.net/jump/wnustraining). Some examples:

- ***Teaching Sunday School: A Wonderful Calling***
- ***Teaching Law and Gospel: A Real Balancing Act***
- ***Teaching the Way Children Actually Learn***
- ***What Kind of Teacher Are You Anyway?***
- ***The Seven Principles of Learning for All Age Groups***
- ***Types of Questions***

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*

Nothing matters more than effective Christian education. And we could add that nothing makes the Christian education more meaningful and memorable than good teaching that engages the students, accommodates their different learning styles, and makes the time spent in God's Word truly enjoyable.

If you are a teacher of God's Word, try with God's help to become the best teacher you can possibly be. You'll be amazed at what will happen!



Ministry in a Sunday School Is a Team Effort

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

In business and industry, the past decade has witnessed the development and expansion of “Human Resources” departments because the people of any company or organization are a vital asset that must be managed conscientiously and cared for well or else the endeavor founders. When it comes to the ministry of a WELS Sunday school, human resources matter, too. The people most directly involved—pastor, superintendent/coordinator, teachers—have a dramatic impact on how well things will go. Certainly, it is the Holy Spirit that produces the results, but experience suggests that the “success” of a Sunday school is closely tied to the team-spirit of the staff.

Because of sin, we know that members of any ministry team can lose focus on the big picture, lose interest in spiritual and professional growth, lose heart for ministry, lose a caring attitude for each other and those being served. *If a Sunday school’s ministry team is going to effectively carry out the task given to it by God, it must commit itself to a team effort that does the following:*

Focuses the ministry team on the God-appointed mission of the Sunday school

The Sunday school, in close partnership with the Christian home and congregation, exists to make disciples by sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19-20). That is its mission. Using God’s Word, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Sunday school trains its young disciples to clearly see Jesus, dearly love him, closely follow him, and confidently share him. A team approach to ministry nurtures a stronger commitment to share Jesus Christ through the Sunday school.

Encourages the ministry team to care for each of its members

Love one another. (John 13:34); Honor one another. (Romans 12:10); Encourage one another. (Hebrews 10:25); Accept one another. (Romans 15:7); Submit to one another. (Ephesians 5:21); Be devoted to one another. (Romans 12:10); Speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. (Ephesians 5:19); Instruct one another. (Romans

15:14); Spur one another on. (Hebrews 10:24); Admonish one another. (Colossians 3:16); Bear with one another in love. (Ephesians 4:2). These familiar “one-anothering” passages from God’s Word provide a good answer to the question, “Why do we need to think about Sunday school as a team ministry?” for, in the largest sense, they define what team members are to do: care for each other.



A team attitude helps the members of the Sunday school ministry recognize that they are all sinners who have been graciously redeemed by the blood of Jesus. It also reminds the members of the Sunday school team that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, they can truly live as the body of Christ, accepting that each team member has been gifted by God just the way he wants them to be in

order to do the work he has determined for them to do at this place and time (1 Corinthians 12).

Assists the ministry team to improve and grow

The Bible has much to say about doing everything to God’s glory (2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Colossians 3:17), serving him faithfully (1 Samuel 12:24, 1 Corinthians 4:2), doing things in a proper way (1 Corinthians 14:40, Colossians 2:5), and serving others selflessly (Galatians 5:13, Philippians 2:4). Applying the truths of these passages with an eye on improving and growing as minister-teachers will cause every member of the Sunday school team to love each other, pray for each other, and work together.

Reminds the ministry team to train the whole child

Sunday school teachers and aides understand that the whole person (mind-body-soul) must be trained and nurtured to do all things to the glory of God. When a Sunday school’s ministry team views its students and each other in this holistic way, and adjusts its curriculum and activities to stress this, everyone grows.

Ministry in a Sunday school is a team effort. Do all you can to make your Sunday school staff a competent, committed, and caring group of partners.

Secrets for Better Listening

Establish rapport and build trust with your fellow Sunday school staff members by learning to listen. The five approaches below will improve your listening skills, open up the lines of communication, and demonstrate that you truly care about fellow staff members. And, by listening better, you just might learn something!

1. Look and listen

Pay attention to both actual words and nonverbal clues, such as body language, tone of voice, and inflection. When a person's words and their body language disagree, the body language is more likely to be communicating their true feelings.

2. Project interest

Sincere acknowledgment, even a nod of the head or an encouraging "uh-huh," can reassure the other person you're following what's being said. Looking around the room, allowing your eyes to glaze over as you think of other things, or checking out the text message on your cell phone will communicate the opposite.

3. Invite expansion

Don't jump in with a response at the first opportunity—no matter how much you think you've got the perfect

comment. When there's a pause, prompt the speaker to continue with what he or she was saying with open-ended phrases like, "Tell me more about that."

4. Clarify information

Ask for specific details or examples to help fill in missing information. This is especially important if the person has a tendency to use words like "always"—you want to know if in this case that really means once every six months. Again, remember open-ended questions like "Why?" do the most to prompt open communication.

5. Summarize

Repeat in your own words the main points of the conversation. Ask the other person to confirm whether you understand accurately. "So it sounds like you're saying . . . is that right?"



Reinforcing Your Lesson Differently

An approach sometimes used at St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Middleton, WI

As a neat switch to how you reinforce a Sunday school lesson, why not try an approach that mirrors the approach below. Of course, you would need to tailor the approach to your students' level. The example below uses "Jairus Meets Jesus" from Matthew 9:18-26, Mark 5:22-43, and Luke 8:41-50. After the lesson is taught, divide your reinforcement activities into the eight areas below and assign students to each area (draw names, count off by eights, etc. to see what group they will be in). Have each group work on their assignment for 10-15 minutes and then present/report to the other groups.



VISUAL ARTS

Use the poster paper to illustrate Jesus' power.



LANGUAGE ARTS

Jesus said the child was "sleeping." Make a chart with two tables. In one column list all the ways death, for the Christian, is like sleep. In the other column, list all the ways you can think of that death is, for the Christian, not at all like sleep.



DRAMATIC ARTS

Write a modern day story like Jairus' daughter. Change the names, places and circumstances to make it fit our times. Prepare your script and be ready to perform for the other groups. You may leave the room and use the hall if you like.



MUSIC ARTS

Page through the "Death and Burial" and "Funeral" section of the hymnal to find phrases that picture death as "sleep." Write them on the easel pad.



EMOTION QUESTIONS

The woman was pictured as sitting alone and crying. She was an outcast, unable to go to church because she was "unclean" and unable to be with others. List five situations in which a Christian today might find himself or herself in similar circumstances – unable to be in church or with people he or she loves and one thing we might do to help him or her.



APPLICATION QUESTIONS

The darkest moment of Jairus' life became an opportunity to experience the grace and power of God. Sometimes it can be like that for us. Describe how you've seen this in the life of another believer or in your own life.



FACT QUESTIONS

Jesus took only Peter, James and John with him into the house to witness the miracle. List the other times you find in the Gospels that Jesus took aside these disciples, the "inner three."



BRIGHT IDEA QUESTIONS

When the woman took hold of Jesus' garment, she demonstrated that she was under his authority. There was no magic in Jesus' clothes, but Jesus had the ability to cure her. We can't take hold of Jesus' garment as she did, but name the actions we can do to demonstrate that we are under his authority.

Only At Sunday School!



Nine-year-old Joey was asked by his mother what he had learned in Sunday School.

"Well, Mom, our teacher told us how God sent Moses behind enemy lines on a rescue mission to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. When he got to the Red Sea, he had his engineers build a pontoon bridge, and all the people walked across safely. Then he used his walkie-talkie to radio headquarters and call in an air strike. They sent in bombers to blow up the bridge and all the Israelites were saved."

"Now, Joey, is that REALLY what your teacher taught you?" his mother asked.

"Well, no, Mom, but if I told it the way the teacher did, you'd never believe it."

Christ-Light® 2 Update

by Mark Buske—Marketing Director,
Northwestern Publishing House

Early this summer Northwestern Publishing House celebrated the official kickoff of the Christ-Light® curriculum revision. While writing has been going on for several years, the lengthy production process begins now.

Eight of 48 sets of lessons have passed on to the first leg of a long journey that will ultimately end in your classrooms.



The first stop is the copy editing department, where specialists in grammar and sentence structure will fine-tune the wording and punctuation. From there, the set will travel to the design department, where graphic artists will lay out each heading, paragraph,

question, and answer in the format that you will eventually see. Some of the more time-consuming tasks involve the commissioning and placement of the art.

Because this is a revision of the Christ-Light® curriculum, three levels (grades 1-2 through 5-6) will use the original full-color art. However, approximately six thousand pieces of line art are needed for the teacher's guides and copy masters. Much of that will be commissioned. After a series of reviews and revisions, the student lessons will then be prepared for the printer, while other components will be converted to files for presentation on CDs.

This is a brief summary of a process that actually involves hundreds and hundreds of production steps. For those of us who serve at Northwestern Publishing House, it is an exhilarating process as we work together to develop a superior curriculum that will serve God's people for years to come.



Please contact us with any questions or for further information.

Consider Everyday

If you are teaching junior high to high school students, some of the new "Everyday" video vignettes may give your lessons an added lift. "Everyday" is a new effort from WELS Youth Discipleship to get teens thinking about the faith they have, the sins they face, the relationships they forge, the victories they can claim, and the hope that they have for this life and for the next.



About half of the projected 52 videos are posted on WELS Media Web site, Streams (<http://streams.wels.net>). Each week one of the "Everyday" videos is also posted on the LivingBold homepage (www.livingbold.net).

Use the videos during a lesson (if you have access to the proper equipment) or assign videos for students to watch and discuss the following week. Or have them discuss the videos online on the video-specific discussion boards.

Kudos for Mini-Courses

The following comments were given in post mini-course evaluations.

"Just yesterday I discovered the WELS.net University courses for Sunday School teachers. What an amazing and complete resource! Kudos to all who put that together. Somehow [these courses] need to be better advertised so everyone knows! Keep up the great work!"

"I enjoyed using the spiritual gifts tool. It will help me think about where I should focus my efforts in the church. It allowed me to admit that there are some things I really don't enjoy doing, while being able to say that there are some things I enjoy a lot."

"These mini-courses are renewing my energy and sense of importance for our SS program. Thank you for having this available!"

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