

Partners

A black silhouette of a family of seven people (two adults and five children) holding hands in a line, positioned above the word 'Partners'.

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

Don't Lose Your Way

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

One summer, my family took a camping trip through northern CA, Oregon, and Washington. We had just purchased a new mini-van and thought the trip would be a good test of it. One night, we wanted to get to a certain camp site before dark. My wife noticed that the map showed a shortcut to the campsite. The shortcut was labeled, “unimproved highway.” The map key defined this as “more gravel than asphalt.” My wife said, “Let’s take it.” I asked, “How long of a stretch is it?” She said, “About 28 miles but it will save us an hour.” I said, “Let’s go for it.”

The unimproved highway was really great—for the first five miles—and then it got bumpier, and narrower, and dustier.

After five more miles, I made the executive decision to turn off the air conditioner because I didn’t think the dust being sucked into my new van’s air conditioning was a good idea. We opened the windows, as it was about 85 degrees outside, but the dust was coming in so much I told everyone to close them.

After five more miles, the road narrowed to one lane, and we were going about 11 miles an hour to minimize the dust cloud created by the van. Drenched in perspiration I asked, “Does it seem a bit odd that we haven’t seen any other cars on this road?” I am sure my wife suggested that we turn around, but

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being a man, and committed to the plan we had devised, I said, "No...anyway, how would I turn around?" I asked my wife. "Perhaps you haven't noticed, honey, but the road you picked for us has been one lane for the last three miles and tree branches have been scraping both sides of the van."

At this point, my son who was four years old asked, "Dad, are there any mountain lions in these woods?" My response was short and to the point: "Be still, son. When Mom selected this great route for us she probably also figured out how we can fight them off."

Well, to make a long story longer, after two more miles the conversation between driver and navigator had become a bit more heated in more ways than one. We had 13 miles to go which was too far to go under these conditions. We had gone 15 miles already, too far to try and drive in reverse. I stopped the car and my wife and I squared off in a hot, sweaty, verbal donnybrook that would have scared away any mountain lion within a 25 mile radius.

At one of the breath-catching pauses in the argument, my daughter, who was 6 years old at the time, said from the back seat, "Mommy and Daddy, don't you think we should be praying about this?" Our arguing stopped dead. Out of the mouth of a babe, two sweaty, sinful, and ashamed adults were rebuked.

We did pray, right then and there, for forgiveness, for patience, for protection, and guidance. And then we slowly stared down the road again. A mile further, we came upon another road that was not on the map but was wider and looked more traveled. We took it and were led back to the main highway. We were saved!

Later that night, as we sat by our campfire, we talked about how the Lord had shown us the way when we seemed so lost. The Lord showed us the way out when we were lost in the woods, and he shows us the way out from being lost in our sins. We read John 14:6, "Jesus answered, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'" John 14:6 is not news to any of us. We know with all of our hearts that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We know what he has done for us and how good inside we feel about it. We know that someday we will be in heaven where no one is lost, where no roads are unimproved, but all are paved with gold.

Dear Sunday school teacher, enjoy your summer and whatever fun trips you may be taking. And never lose the memory of the times when you have been lost. Without a sense of what being lost is like, you will not be fully able to identify and empathize with those around you whose souls are still lost. And unless you can identify, even a little, with those who are lost spiritually, you won't be the best Sunday school teacher you can be.

Helping Students Grasp What You're Teaching

Excerpted and adapted from "Teaching Abstract Concepts to Concrete Thinking Kids" by Christine Yount Jones, executive editor of Children's Ministry Magazine, used with permission.

For the complete article go to:

<http://www.childrensministry.com/article.asp?ID=1778>

Throw away worksheets. The idea that a good classroom is one where kids sit still and do pencil-and-paper activities is detrimental to real learning. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, these teaching methods decrease children's motivation to learn. Child development researchers have demonstrated that children acquire knowledge about their world through playful interaction with objects and people. Create a learning environment that is full of sensory experiences. Your kids must smell, taste, hear, touch or see the abstract concept you want to convey.

Store chairs. And get kids up and moving. Effective learning occurs when children are personally or actively involved. In fact, cognitive growth is enhanced by personal involvement. In an experiment cited in *Your Child's Growing Mind*, a revolving bar apparatus was rigged up for one kitten to pull another kitten in a basket. Every day the same kitten would pull the other kitten around a patterned box. Both kittens had the same visual stimuli. But at the end of the experiment, the working kitten had more brain growth than the passive kitten.

Close the door. Noise is good. Teachers who crave control are probably not going to like what they see in the kind of classroom that children would find very appealing. It might look unstructured to these teachers and undisciplined. There needs to be structure, but within that control, there needs to be exploration of ideas. And again, people who have trouble with that are going to have trouble teaching children in a way that children will either enjoy or profit from.

Ask questions. The teacher has to be able to stop dispensing information long enough to listen to the children and encourage the children's questions. And that's how you build the higher conceptual thinking—by answering their question with another question that pushes them into thinking harder about it and reflecting more on it... When

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Outreach Through the Invisible Sunday School

by Randi Pomerantz — Spokane, WA

For various reasons the majority of children in our neighborhoods will never be included in the organized church for Sunday school classes because their parents have no positive experiences in the church and seemingly little interest in a good religious program. To address this need, I came up with

the idea of taking Sunday school to the neighborhood by distributing Bible lessons. I called my program, “The Invisible Sunday School.”

There are 52 lessons in the program, one for each week of the year. The program starts with the birth of Christ and ends with his ascension. The weekly classes are distributed throughout the community in places where permission to

leave them has been given: restaurants, hair salons, donut shops, dentist’s and doctor’s offices, and garages. The classes include a stand to hold them and small inexpensive pack of color crayons so that the children can go to work while their parents are occupied at the place of business.

Since the program first started, there have been translations made by Multi-Language Publications in El Paso, TX (a WELS outreach program). These translations are now available: Modern Mandarin Chinese, Russian, Korean, Spanish, Urdu, and French. I have received favorable comments from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon Wisconsin; Jesus Cares Ministries in West-Allis, Wisconsin; WELS Kingdom Workers in Wauwatosa Wisconsin; and Jars of Clay, a WELS Women’s Ministry.

Maybe The Invisible Sunday School could help you take Jesus to your community and build a bridge to your church. You can check out Invisible Sunday School lessons at <http://www.invisiblesundayschool.com/> or call Mrs. Pomerantz at 509-536-5376.

Publishing this article should not be construed as an endorsement of the product by WELS CYD.

“Helping Students Grasp What You’re Teaching” . . . continued from page 2.

you ask questions, you’ll discover whether the child has the adequate mental hooks to attach an abstract concept to. In a pre-school lesson about Elijah and the widow, wide-eyed kids listened intently. But when the teacher asked the children, “Who knows what a widow is?” one girl’s hand shot up, and she answered, “It’s a spider!”

Appeal to children’s emotions. Giving children an opportunity to express their feelings makes learning personal to them. Ask questions such as “How would you feel if you had been Abraham?” or “How did you feel when you were kind to Kyle?”

Build bridges. Children must be able to connect an abstract concept to something they’ve already experienced in their own world—their mental hook. If learning is relevant to children’s known experience, they’ll be able to cross the “bridge” to abstract learning. In one class, a teacher built bridges of understanding by having young children play musical chairs. After the game, children discussed how they felt when chairs kept disappearing. Then the teacher asked, “Are there ever times on the playground when there aren’t enough swings to play on?” Yes, the children nodded. “That’s called scarcity,” explained the teacher. And she went on to build a bridge of understanding to explain scarcity of resources in the world.

Use age-appropriate terms. Iris Mears, executive president of Children’s Christian Ministries Association in California, explains that children may have difficulty with some terms. She uses the term “Boss” instead of “Master” with children and they understand that. She suggests referring to the Bible as “letters from God” . . . Kids may not pass a theological vocabulary test, but they’ll begin to understand the concept better.

Provide faith models. Christianity is relational; we have a relationship with God and with each other. The hands-on material of our faith is our relationships. Rather than just talking about kindness, model it in your relationships with children and other adults. And point out abstract qualities that children display, such as “Thank you for being patient, Deziree.” Expose children to the abstract concepts of our faith, but don’t rush them. As children mature, concepts will meld with their cognitive growth. Follow the example of Jesus, the master teacher. He understood that people need mental hooks to hang abstract concepts on. Even to crowds of adults, Jesus used concrete parables and object lessons to explain abstract concepts.

Christ-Light 2® Curriculum Update

by Pastor Ray Schumacher — Christ-Light® Editor, Northwestern Publishing House

Christ-Light 2 new features include:

- A separate Sunday school curriculum package. (Core lessons from both the Old and New Testaments will be offered for a three-year cycle.)
- A special packet of seasonally appropriate lessons that teachers may easily insert into their plans during the Christmas and Lent/Easter seasons.
- Simplified teachers' guides with optional questions and activities that are easier to find and use.
- A more complete menu of auditory, visual, and kinesthetic activities.
- Teacher's guides and copy masters on CD.
- Memory treasures set to music (on CD) in order to enhance memorization.
- Hymns on CD.
- Two sets of song CDs (for grades Prek-K and 1-4).
- A multimedia DVD with activities for levels Prek-K through 5-6.



The development of the new and improved *Christ-Light*® curriculum, *Christ-Light 2*, is in progress. The lesson templates are almost complete, and more than half of the lessons have been rewritten. They will be formatted this summer, using the various templates.

This ambitious project involves 156 lessons for each of the four levels, from Prek-K through grades 5 and 6. Eight brand new topical courses for grades 7 and 8 are also being developed. New teaching pictures are being commissioned for the Prek-K level. More than 6,000 other visual images, from charts and diagrams to line art sketches, will be incorporated throughout the entire curriculum.



Precise publishing plans and timetables have not been established. Projects of this magnitude take several years to complete. It is our sincere prayer that God will bless our efforts and that the revised curriculum will be a great benefit to his church.

Only At Sunday School!

Sunday school 2nd graders answer questions about mothers:

Why did God make mothers?

- She's the only one who knows where the scotch tape is.
- To help us out of there when we were getting born.

What ingredients are mothers made of?

- God made mothers out of clouds and angel hair and everything nice in the world and one dab of mean.
- They had to get their start from men's bones. Then they mostly use string, I think.

Why did God give you your mother and not some other mom?

- We're related.
- God knew she likes me a lot more than other people's moms like me.

If you could change one thing about your mom, what would it be?

- I'd make my mom smarter. Then she would know it was my sister who did it and not me.
- I would like her to get rid of those invisible eyes on the back of her head.



Resources

Soaring High!

Conduct an awesome VBS this summer with Northwestern Publishing House's *Soaring High!* Join the tour guide, Tad Venture, on a five-day balloon adventure to California, Brazil, Yellowstone, Lake Michigan, and Hawaii. While on the trip, you'll also see the heights of God's love for all of us. Call 800-662-6022 or visit www.nph.net.



Sing the Scriptures!

by Linda Moeller

31 Bible Passage-Based Songs for Elementary Classrooms and Choirs

Reproducible Choir Parts and Accompaniment CD Included

About the Songs: I have always been intrigued with the idea of using God's gift of music as a memory aid. When I was asked in 1979 to write songs for a new kindergarten religion curriculum to be published by Northwestern Publishing House, it seemed natural to set Bible passages to music. Through the years I've added to the collection, and now we've gathered them together in a single volume. Some are short enough to be learned after a Bible lesson to help with a Memory Gem; some have several verses and are long enough to use in church. I pray you find them a blessing as you and your students study the Scriptures!

How to Order: Send check or money order for \$29.95 plus \$3.00 shipping and handling for a total of \$32.95 (WI residents include sales tax for a total of \$34.60) to Linda Moeller, 919 Richards Ave, Watertown, WI 53094.

Questions? You can reach Linda at moeller2@charter.net or call her at 920-261-0327

Sunday School Basics

This 2005 resource is a Concordia Publishing House (CPH) product. It is a "book about fundamentals...the basic things you need to know about Sunday school in order to assist in carrying out its mission in the church today." Chapter titles are...



- The History of Sunday School
- The Philosophy and Purpose of Sunday School
- Staffing Your Sunday School
- Staff Development
- Child Development
- Reviewing Curriculum
- Structuring Your Sunday School
- The Sunday School Classroom
- Promoting Sunday School
- The Well-Stocked Cupboard
- Special Needs Students
- Music in the Sunday School
- Sunday School Special Events

This is not a WELS-produced resource, although it used to be offered at Northwestern Publishing House. Be discerning but also open to some great insights and ideas. *Sunday School Basics* is \$19.99 and can be ordered from the CPH Web site: <http://www.cph.org/cphstore>. Type the book title in the search box.

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Partners

Next Issues Only Online

Beginning with the Fall 2008 edition, *Partners* will only be available online. **YOU WILL NO LONGER BE ABLE TO RECEIVE IT IN THE MAIL.** To get *Partners* online please do the following:

- 1) Go to www.wels.net/youthdiscipleship.
- 2) Click on the "Newsletters" image.
- 3) Click on the appropriate, blue "E-mail Notification" link.
- 4) Follow the steps in the "Delivery Methods" box at the very bottom of the page.
- 5) Watch for the e-mail about the new issue.

Reader Feedback

*by Brenda Eich — Bethel Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, SD
(edited for space and clarity)*

I VERY MUCH agreed with everything in your last *Partners* issue regarding the "Hidden Curriculum." I taught Sunday school (SS) for about eight years. I enjoyed teaching the younger children (K-3) as they were amused to paint/color/cut or make crosses out of play dough, etc. as I told the story. I tried to make it fun first and then slip in the law and gospel of the story. I think at that age they are excited to hear a new story. They have big hearts. They also understood the law/gospel when I would apply it to their lives today.

I also feel that teenagers feel disconnected from the church. They are too old for SS and don't have the fondest memories of SS. It was something they HAD to do. They also do not feel comfortable sitting in adult Bible study. They come to church because mom wants them to come. I pray for the Holy Spirit to open their eyes. I truly believe this is a real problem in our WELS churches. Thank you for touching on this. I am going to highlight several points in the issue and take it to our SS teachers' meeting.

Please contact us with any questions or for further information.