

KEEPING THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING

"Things which matter most must never be at the mercy of things which matter least"

Goethe

The first priority of the Sunday School is to be the outreach arm of the church. What happens often is that a Sunday School class becomes merely a follow-up ministry. There certainly must be follow-up of new Christians and visitors to help them bond to the church, however, outreach to the unsaved and unchurched needs to be a priority. We should regularly be enrolling unsaved people in our classes. Not only do we have a lot of prospective members that need to be enrolled but there are also a lot of church members unenrolled in Bible study.

Effective management is putting "first things first". While leadership decides what "first things" are, it is management that puts them first, day by day, moment by moment.

Management is discipline, carrying it out.

80% of the results flow out of 20% of the activities. The enemy of the best is often the good.

The mission statement of our Sunday School is:

- I. The first priority of Sunday School is to be the outreach arm of the church.** Based on the command of Matthew 28:18-20 to make and baptize disciples and Acts 1:8, along with the entire focus of Acts, our marching orders are clear. The first priority of each class is to be on outreach and evangelism.
- II. The Sunday School is the bonding and assimilation arm of the church.** People are best kept in church when they have formed friendships, have a group to identify with, and are ministered to. (Romans 12:5, Acts 4:30, and Acts 2:41-42).
- III. The Sunday School is the teaching arm of the church.** Bible teaching must be done to meet the spiritual needs of people and provide practical application. (Acts 2:42; Matthew 28:19-20; and Colossians 1:28).
- IV. The Sunday School is the serving arm of the church.** Sunday School provides opportunities for every member to find a place of service and exercise their spiritual gifts. (I Corinthians 12:1-7 and Galatians 5:13).
- V. The Sunday School is the priority ministry of the church.** The growth of every other organization depends on the Sunday School as its resource.

How does a class accomplish this goal on a weekly basis?

I. Casting a Vision

A. Make clear to the class this top priority

1. Personal commitment to outreach and witnessing by teacher and prospect outreach leader.
2. Sunday School lesson.
3. Shared outreach goals - Teacher, outreach leader, and the class need to talk about growth goals and then prayerfully set the goals. Keep the goals visual. Do you make a conscious effort to take time and set outreach goals?
4. Shared prayer requests - Spoken or unspoken prayer requests for lost and unchurched people.

5. Shared reports on outreach activities by outreach leaders, teachers, or class members.
6. Shared responsibilities - One group a month responsible for class outreach efforts. Have phone calls, post cards, and visits assigned on Sunday mornings. Ask each person to choose 1 to 10 ways they will be involved in outreach once a month.
 - a. Make one visit this month to an absentee member.
 - b. Make one visit this month to someone who visited your class. (any day you choose)
 - c. Make at least one phone call this month to a new member or visitor to your class.
 - d. I will pray by name for every absentee on our Sunday School roll weekly during this month.
 - e. I will help provide assistance in the nursery or children's rooms once this month while others visit.
 - f. I will come once this month to telephone new members who have joined our church recently to see how they are relating to the Sunday School.
 - g. I will volunteer to sit with those visiting our class in the worship center, walk with them to the parking lot, or assist them in finding their preschoolers or children.
 - h. I will go with another person in our class to make an outreach visit.
 - i. I will take FAITH, The Net, or a One Day Soul Winning Workshop or serve as an equipper.

For Group Leaders:

- j. I will commit as a group leader to calling every person in my group weekly.
 - k. I will be responsible for seeing that my group does outreach visits once a month.
7. Class outreach poster - keep it visible

Our Goal is:

To have # of people in Sunday School by certain time

To have our class represented weekly in outreach

To see every person in our class involved monthly

To be a Great Commission class

To find every way to reach everyone we can for Bible study

8. Prospect outreach leaders should take 2 or 3 minutes weekly to share outreach results.
9. Outreach group of the month award, Outreach person of the month award.
10. To plan class events which require a couple or single to bring someone else for free admission.
11. Try one new outreach idea a month for one year - See Appendix A

MOTIVATING PEOPLE FOR OUTREACH

Why is it that there are people who say they believe in evangelism and want to see people saved, yet they are not involved in making this a reality? In other words, they are not involved in outreach on a consistent basis.

What would motivate people to be involved in Sunday School outreach? Some things that have worked for our Sunday School are as follows:

- I. Personal commitment of the teacher to evangelism and outreach. A teacher who talks about visits they have made and personal witnessing experiences, helps to model outreach for the class.
- II. Personal invitation from the teacher to others. Many people need to know someone will go with them and help them learn what to do and what to say. Making general announcements to be at visitation usually does not work. Personal invitations and assurance from the teacher or outreach leader will do the job.
- III. Personal challenges by the staff, teacher, or outreach team to the class often generates excitement. We have given classes some outrageous challenges to motivate them to be involved. One staff member agreed to have the outreach goal shaved in the back of his head if we reached that number for outreach. We did and he did! Challenge the class to seek to stretch themselves as they seek to out-do their neighboring class.
- IV. Personal conviction is the greatest motivator. Sunday School lessons that deal with the condition and destiny of the lost need to be shared on a consistent basis. Beliefs lead to convictions that lead to actions that lead to results. People who get involved in FAITH or other witness training begin to grow in their conviction for evangelism.
- V. Personal testimony to class members from new Christians, or from people who have led others to Christ is a way to develop excitement and vision for evangelism.
- VI. Evangelism and outreach is the top priority of the church. The best way to make it effective is through Sunday School. People can be motivated to be involved in outreach.

Personal ways people can use their spiritual gifts to witness is another motivating factor. Every person is to be a witness according to the Bible. How every person is to witness is open-ended. Share practical ways people can do Sunday School outreach through using the telephone, inviting others, using kind deeds to build relationships, post cards, letters, etc.
- VII. Personal prayer for unmotivated people also is needed. Pray for class members who seem unmoved and uncaring. If they do not take advantage of any of the other opportunities there could be a spiritual problem. Pray for God to work in their life to remove the hindrance to evangelism.

APPENDIX A

Roll Call Sunday - One Sunday, instead of having the secretary mark the roll as people come in, do a roll call at the beginning of class. As the roll is called, assign absentees to class members as a contact for the next week. The contact needs to be an in-home visit. Let the absentees know you missed them in Sunday School and would love to see them back in class.

State of the Sunday School Report - This is a good idea for January as you begin a new quarter in Sunday School. Make a list of all the chronic absentees in your Sunday School class. Assign them to the leadership in your class for an in-home visit. Seek to reach that person for active attendance. You will probably be surprised to find out just how many absentees you have. This is your best prospect field. Many of these people at one time attended Sunday School. We need to make an all out effort to get them back.

Beat the Best - Contact the Sunday School office to find out your highest attendance during the year. Then set a date for a high attendance Sunday and set a goal that will beat your best! Pull out all the stops to make this an exciting day in your class.

A Touch of Class - Every person who visits or enrolls in your Sunday School over the period of one month gets a phone call or a personal note from every person in the class.

Operation Pillsbury - Every person who visits or enrolls in your Sunday School class over a period of one month is carried a plate of cookies, brownies, etc., by a class member (a different person each week is chosen) or find a neighbor, friend, or co-worker of someone in your class that is not in church and carry them a "goodies" treat. Tell them it is from your Bible Study class and that you are trying to do a better job of making friends and sharing kindness.

Class 4 Outreach Visitation - This is a great way to get more of your class members involved in visitation. Advance planning and good promotion is needed to make this successful for your class. The steps you need to take to make this work are:

- a. Divide your class into four groups and select a leader for each group. If you have four group leaders you may want to use them or use other key leaders in your class.
- b. Assign each group a night to visit. The member outreach leader and the prospect outreach leader need to decide on assignments for each team. Be sure to include prospects and absentee members. The team leader needs to have his assignments no later than the day before his visitation night.
- c. After the team leader receives his assignments, he needs to subdivide his group into teams and assign each team 2 or 3 visits. The team leader needs to be ready when team members arrive. He/she may want to clip the visits together and attach a card with the team members' name on it. Another idea would be to contact the church and ask for a room where their team could meet together. This provides an opportunity to make assignments and pray together before getting on their way.

Literature Distribution - One way for class leaders to get into the homes of every class members at some time is to deliver Sunday School materials to all members each quarter. This could be done through group leaders (they should enlist active group members to visit with them) or by dividing your class into four groups and assigning each group a quarter that they will be responsible for delivering the materials.

Get to Know You Day - Most adults become involved in a class through personal friendships with other persons. Plan a fellowship that will encourage your class to interact with one another. Set a date well in advance, promote it well, and make sure all games and activities are well-planned and organized. You will be amazed at the difference in your class once those friendships really begin to form.

All in The Family Month - Sometimes a concerted effort to let everyone in the family know they are appreciated can have a great impact on attendance. This activity has two basic parts: reaching everyone enrolled in the class to let members know they are appreciated, especially if they have been absent for a while; and involving every member in a family-oriented activity. This will take careful planning. Try to find a time when the greatest number can be there. You may want to reserve a park or some other type facility for this event. You will need to talk with class members and try to plan a variety of activities so that you can reach all ages. Older youth attending with their parents could be helpful in planning activities to do with the younger children. Close the fellowship with an emphasis on the family and how family members can support one another.

Supper Club - The number one reason many adults attend Sunday School is for fellowship. Adults need, want, and will make an effort to participate in activities that offer fellowship experiences. Sunday School classes need to build around this idea.

A supper club can build stronger relationships among members, new members, and prospects. With interaction taking place outside the classroom, the interaction within the classroom will improve and become more meaningful.

Establishing a supper club for a class is an easy process. You will need to follow these four basic steps in beginning your supper club:

- a. Find out how many members would be interested in participating. You need to stress that a firm commitment is needed from those who want to be a part of the supper club.
- b. Form groups from those who sign up. You may want to include another class and have groups formed between the two classes.
- c. Let each group meet and determine the best time for their supper club to meet, usually on a monthly basis.
- d. Assign prospects to each club. The clubs will be responsible for inviting these prospects and taking necessary steps to get each prospect to attend at least once. This is a great way for helping assimilate those prospects into Sunday School.

Each month the club will meet in a different home. Members of the club can decide if the host family will prepare the meal or assign covered dishes. You will need to decide on the formality or informality of the meals and also make decisions regarding children.

It is important that the evening be relaxed and that the club members work well together. This will be essential if the prospects are going to feel comfortable.

A supper club will strengthen any class. Additional clubs can be started as new members join or as others who decided not to participate see the fun the others are having. You may want to form completely new clubs at the beginning of every year to avoid the development of cliques and to help people get to know more people.