

## VISUALIZE THE GROWING SUNDAY SCHOOL

In addition to the mission statement, it is important to develop your Sunday School dream. Which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Which comes first, the dream or the mission statement? The answer is yes. They are mutually dependent on each other. Dreams give purpose and a clear purpose enables us to dream big dreams. David visualized victory before the battle began. He had an overcoming faith in an overcoming God. He saw it before he saw it. As Sunday School leaders, we must dream dreams to help fulfill or develop our mission statement or to develop our mission. Here are some principles that will assist us in visualizing the growing Sunday School.

1. *Ask God to help you dream.* Prayer and a consistent study of God's Word are the clearest way to have God reveal His heart to you. Does God really have a specific purpose for my Sunday School? Absolutely yes! God has a specific task for each prophet, each apostle, and each church listed in the New Testament. He wants you to know His vision for your Sunday School.
2. *Pray for others to catch the vision.* The way to see people awake to God's vision is prayer. Acts 2:31 says, "And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness." (NKJV)

### Here are ten practical ways to lead your church leaders in seeking God's mind and heart for your Sunday School:

1. Have a prayer retreat with your leaders. If you cannot get away for a weekend retreat, plan an in-house prayer retreat. Several ideas that can make this in-house prayer meeting effective are to:
  - a. Set a Saturday for prayer
  - b. Have a planning team prepare Sunday School rooms. Each Sunday School room would represent a different aspect of prayer such as a praise room, an intercessory room, a wisdom room, a petition room, etc. Any time during the day, people can come to pray. There should be a coordinator present to explain how to use the rooms.
2. Plan 24 or 48 hours of prayer around the clock. Have Sunday School members sign up for a 30 or 60 minute prayer time at the church or in their Sunday School room.
3. Set aside, during Sunday School, a month to pray for specific needs. For example, on the first Sunday of prayer month, take time to pray for God's goals for your class in terms of attendance and enrollment. On the second Sunday, pray for inactive members and on the third Sunday pray for a mission project, etc. You can develop your own special prayer Sundays.
4. Have each class develop their own prayer strategy. Give them a time from which to set a class prayer meeting. This prayer time or series of prayer times will be focused just on seeing God's will and goal for Sunday School.
5. Develop prayer partners in the Sunday School class. These prayer partners covenant to pray for some time each week, together or separately, for the Sunday School. Prayer triplets are especially effective. For these months, these three people focus on praying for God's will for their lives, their class, and their church.
6. Take the Wednesday evening prayer service and focus on praying for a designated period of weeks just for the Sunday School. Have a prayer list prepared to be handed out listing specific prayer areas such as goals, visitation program, leaders and teachers needed, high attendance campaigns, and other specifics you would like to include.
7. In-home "cottage" prayer meetings are still effective. If we pray for revivals, we can certainly pray for Sunday School. Planned revival services come once or twice a year. Sunday School happens every week. Which has the potential for having the greater long term influence?
8. Men's or ladies prayer nights or early morning prayer sessions are helpful. For ten years, a group of men have met faithfully at our church at 5:30 am on Friday mornings. The number of men varies, but the regularity of the prayer time remains.
9. Challenge the Sunday School teachers to pray by name for each class member weekly. Have each care leader do the same for their members. Pastors and Sunday School directors can pray for the teachers and care leaders. Everyone is responsible for praying for someone.
10. Set aside days of fasting and prayer. Search the Scripture for examples of prayer fasts. When there are extreme challenges facing Sunday School leaders, the obstacles may not be removed except by prayer and fasting.