

T.E.A.C.H.

Got Any Change? by Dan Harrison

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When I think of change I often smile because it reminds me of the following story about a boy scout that encountered some significant resistance to change. The scout came to a meeting with a black eye so the scoutmaster asked how he got it. He replied, *I was trying to help an old lady across the street.* The scout explained, *"She didn't want to go."* If you have ever tried to help initiate change, especially in a volunteer organization you understand and identify with the experience of the boy scout.

We know that just about everything in our world today seems to be changing. Hospitals aren't the way they used to be. Banks have changed, now you can do your banking without ever entering a bank building if you choose to. Education has changed drastically with the advent of distance learning and degree completion programs for adults. The honest truth is that hospitals, banks, businesses, educational institutions that are unwilling to change are closing. That is also true of churches as well.

Churches that are closing today either tried to change something they never should have messed with like the gospel or they refused to change some things that desperately needed to change like the way the gospel is communicated. Advancement is impossible without change. Things cannot stay the same and improve at the same time.

How then do we approach change positively and proactively? I want you to think with me about a formula for change I picked up several years ago from a Transformational Leadership E-

mail group. The formula looks like this: $C=D+V=F>R$. The (C) stands for change which is the result of an adequate dissatisfaction with the status quo (D) added to a clear and compelling vision of the future (V), plus clear first steps (F) that has been identified and initiated to move in the desired direction. All these elements must be greater than the resistance to change (R) present in the system.

The resistance to change referred to in the formula above may be the single greatest reason so many churches are dying today. Jean Henri Fabre, a famous French naturalist, conducted an experiment with processionary caterpillars that is intriguing. It is the habit of these caterpillars to attach themselves to one another to form a long train. Each head snugly rests against the rump of its predecessor. With their eyes at half-mast the caterpillars move along as a unit in a sort of blind-leading-the-blind fashion.

In his experiment, Fabre arranged a line of these caterpillars in a rotating ring by attaching the first caterpillar to the last so the procession didn't have a beginning or an end. He put the moving circle on top if a large flowerpot and watched the wooly creatures plod around and around until seven days passed.

Finally, the ring halted when the caterpillars were overtaken by exhaustion and starvation. Linked together like a chain, they died together. The irony was that any one of the caterpillars could have stopped at any time and rested and eaten. Food was within eyeshot, but their eyes were half-closed as they cont

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tinued their circular path. They could have seen, but they chose not to look. Any one of them could have broken the ring and led the others to safety. Instead, they followed custom and perished because of it. We are no different than the processionary caterpillars if we don't look for a better way to accomplish our mission. Like them, if we never dare to divert from the beaten path to take a new direction we will die.

John Maxwell has taught for years that people change when: *"they hurt enough they have to or they learn enough they want to or they receive enough they are able to."* Where is there enough pain present in your church to demand change? Where are you learning enough that you want to change? In what arenas are you receiving enough to be able to pursue a new preferred future?

Bill Hybles has stated that, *Problems must be dealt with and solutions found or the organization grinds to a halt. Solutions require change which is usually resisted as unnecessary.* Are you battling any resistance to needed change? What are you doing about? How will you overcome the resistance and continue pursuing what you believe to be the will of God?

Robert Schuller offers the following, very practical, advice. *"You have to change if you want something you've never had because you have to do something you've never done; you have to learn things you have never known; you have to go places you have never been to and you have to work with people you have never worked with."* How do you rate in these areas?

Change requires us to respond to problems or opportunities with passion, a sense of urgency and a spirit of courage. One of my favorite verses is found in Jeremiah

29:11, *For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans for good and not for evil, plans to give you hope and a future."*

If God is birthing something in you that will require change, follow His leading. If He is impressing upon your heart and mind His preferred future for the group you lead follow the impression and let God work. God has every intention of building our churches into prevailing churches if we will cooperate with Him. If our churches lack vibrance, strength, and effectiveness it is time for a change. Let Him lead you so you can lead your people.



THE FUTURE OF THE HOLINESS CHURCH by Ruthine Joseph

Everything seems to be changing in the world today. Some for the good and some for the bad. It seems that more bad is apparent than good.

For the Holiness Church the future does not have to be bad, but good. The message of the Holiness church should not change: "Holiness unto the Lord" is what we should maintain. We should not halt the message of Holiness even if it is unpopular. We should not be ashamed of Holy living. What is Holy living or holiness? Living a pure life, a life dedicated to the Lord, a life that pleases the Lord.

So the Holiness Church is supposed to give out the message of Holiness. The Holiness message should never change. If the message changes, the future of the Holiness Church will not be a bright one and the world will be doomed.

We should not change the message to please anyone, whether it is family, friends or government. In spite of what laws are passed in the country, we should stick to the Holiness message.

How do we go about giving and maintaining this message?



First of all we should live Holy. Let our lives show forth Holiness in everything we do and say. Our manner of dress, speech, the places we go, the things we watch, what we listen to and the way we carry ourselves in our neighborhoods.

- ⇒ Teach Holiness our Sunday school at all levels.
- ⇒ Preach it from the pulpits
- ⇒ Sing it in our worship
- ⇒ Have slogans made on Holiness
- ⇒ Have bible study sessions on the subject of Holiness
- ⇒ Talk about holy living one on one. We can dress the part but not have it. Holiness can't be put on, it has to be real.

The mission of the church is to get Holiness out in the open; it is not a four walls of the church thing. It is something we are proud of and we want the whole world to know. It is inside hearts but is our duty to let it show on the outside.

Satan and his followers have an agenda to contaminate the whole world. When we look around it seems that way,

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so we need to arise with the message of Holiness and make sure it is heard and seen.

If we do what we are supposed to do as God's ambassadors, the Holiness Church has a bright future. We can't go wrong when we put our future in the hands of the one who Himself is Holy.

Let "Holiness unto the Lord" Be our watch Phrase and Song.

Keeping Sunday School Growth Rate Consistent With Worship Rate

by Roy Hill

I have been asked to write about how to keep Sunday school growth in line with growth in worship services. Although I am no expert on church growth, I believe that many of the same factors involved in church growth also apply to the Sunday school. Some of these are comfort level, quality of the product and ownership of the mission.

One of the main needs of people is comfort level in their surroundings. At one time, the church was the social center of the community and people would come whether they were saved or not. Those days are gone. People now are not going to continue to spend time on a regular basis in a place where they don't feel **accepted and comfortable**. You can put lots of effort into plans and programs to get people into your Sunday school class, but if they don't develop a connection to the rest of the class in a fairly short period of time, they will lose interest and start looking elsewhere. The teacher can't do this alone, no matter how good he or she might be. Members of the class must take the initiative to meet, get to know and befriend new class attendees. Some of this can be accomplished through group events and gatherings, but some of it must be done by individuals willing to take the initiative.



Another important factor in getting and retaining people in the Sunday school is to provide a **quality program**. Churches used to compete with each other to fill the pews, but now there is a world full of activities people can choose from to fill their Sunday mornings. I recently heard Bill Hybels, pastor of Willowcreek Church in Chicago speak at a conference. He said if we are to impact people we must "*make our gatherings memorable*." This would apply to any service, including Sunday school. The lecture method worked at one time, but now we are competing with all kinds of electronic gadgets that produce instant information. We must provide enough variety in teaching to address the varied learning styles and interests of the learners. We must also give students the opportunity to ask questions and discuss how Biblical topics apply to their personal lives.

Fortunately, there are lots of resources available to teachers to help make the lessons interesting and meaningful.



Finally, if we expect to grow our Sunday school classes, we must move our students to take **ownership** of the class and its mission. Every ministry in the church must be based on the premise that we are to seek and win lost people for Christ. This means getting them there and taking them from the passive roles of listener, to the active role of participant. As with growing plants, we can plant the seed then add water and fertilizer. The rest is up to God. We can help the process along by modeling the behaviors we see in Christ that we expect them to acquire. We can also show them that we care for them as God cares for us and that we are there to help share in the good times and bad times. As with the garden, this sometimes means getting our hands dirty with acts of love that might require some sacrifice on our part.

As we work to get new people into the Sunday school, we must remember some other areas that will be impacted by the growth. One is that in order to grow, we must have **space**. A class can quickly outgrow their space and need to expand or divide. That means there must be a plan for providing additional space. Also, there must be adequate **staff** to teach new classes or help with larger classes. This requires a mechanism to recruit and train new teachers and assistants. **Additional resources** are needed to provide the additional curriculum and other media needed to properly teach the new classes. Many churches have tried to grow quickly by starting a van or bus ministry. This can get a rapid increase in numbers, but in many cases, the majority will be children or low functioning adults who will not provide the funding or labor pool necessary to keep the process going. That can lead to friction as precious resources are diverted from other ministries.



If attendance at worship service is increasing at a faster rate than Sunday school, there is a good chance that people don't feel that attending Sunday school is the best use of their time. Talk with your pastor and other ministry leaders about ways to get more people to stay for Sunday school. Lastly, don't forget to pray about it and remember that each new challenge brings new opportunities.

Evaluating the Emphasis of Christian Education by Bruce Morrison

Recent surveys show that less than half of those attending church actually get involved in a Sunday school class or a small group. Could it be that we have missed something important in the process of discipleship? All of us know the importance of deepening the believer's faith. The more biblically sound we become, the more ammunition we have in the battle of righteousness. Jesus knew the importance of this when He told us in the Great Commission to "go and make disciples" rather than "go and make believers."



Why is it that we haven't seen dramatic growth in our Christian education classes for nearly three decades? Could it be that some very important ingredients are missing? Is there more to planning successful classes than just Bible study? It is my contention that there *is* much more that we must plan for when organizing our Christian education classes.

Now before you run to your cellular phone and speed dial your General Superintendent to complain about this article, let me explain my thoughts with some historical validity.

John Ortberg in his book, *"Everybody's Normal 'Till You Get to Know Them"* (Zondervan, 2003) writes: "In the movement associated with John Wesley, people met together in little communities to help hold each other accountable for their deepest values and most important decisions. Wesley had a beautiful phrase for this: he called it **"watching over one another in love."** Before someone entered into this community, they would be asked a series of questions to see if they were serious about living in mutual accountability. Sometimes when I speak on community I'll read these to church leaders, and ask them to imagine these questions being posed to attendees at their churches:

- * Does any sin, inward or outward, have dominion over you?
- * Do you desire to be told of your faults?
- * Do you desire to be told of all your faults-and that plain and clear? (By this point, church leaders are inevitably laughing at even the idea of people putting up with such pointed questions.)
- * Do you desire that we should tell you whatsoever we think, whatsoever we fear, whatsoever we hear concerning you?

- * Do you desire that in doing this we should come as close as possible, that we should cut to the quick, and search your heart to the bottom?
- * Is it your desire and design to be on this and all other occasions entirely open, so as to speak everything that is in your heart, without disguise, and without reserve?

This rugged accountability set the educational bar higher than most of our current adult classes would every try to reach. Why? Because the church is meant to be a family. In this family we exist to build one another up in encouragement and to hold each other accountable when we start to stray. This huge task is virtually impossible without true community. Let me ask you the \$60,000 question, "Does your present Christian education program create an atmosphere that not only 'rightly divides the Word of truth,' but also encourages transparency and openness that will deepen their self-perception and their love to the body of Christ?"

The missing ingredient in many Christian education programs is community. What I mean by community is a coming together where relationships are placed high in priority right next to biblical dialogue. Those relationships bring a much larger agenda to the classroom and the living room cell groups. When true community develops it is a miracle no less impressive than a miracle in the New Testament. Why do I make such an enormous claim? Because Jesus brought together the 12 ordinary men and through that small group He changed with world as we know it! He didn't just sit around the campfire and talk; He always applied what He taught to what He did.



Just look at what will happen when community occurs. The miracle of community (adapted from Larry Stockstill's book *The Cell Church*) is when we see first the miracle of involvement. In John 13:8, the disciples had just come to the last supper and Jesus has taken the basin of water and begun to wash their feet. Then Peter says, "No, you will never wash my feet!" Jesus replied, "But if I don't wash you, you won't belong to me." The word "belong" comes from the word *meros* which can actually mean "can have no part or share." Jesus was saying, "If I don't serve you, we are not partners." Somehow we need to change the classroom to a launch pad for application and involvement. The first goal is to get each attendee involved in some way in that class.

The second miracle of community is encouragement. In John 14:1, Jesus moves from involvement to generating hope. When He saw their obvious disappointment in His leaving, Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled."

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Many of the Christians in our classes have heart trouble. Jesus shifts the fear to "heaven" in verse 2; to prayer in verse 13-14; and to the Holy Spirit's arrival in verse 26. Hebrews 10:24 tells us to: "Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds" Each class or cell group should have edification and encouragement high up on the agenda.

The third miracle of community is results. Jesus' theme for effective discipleship moves from involvement in chapter 13, to encouragement in chapter 14, now He moves to the progress of ministry. John 15:16 reminds us that "You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name." This is the bottom line: evangelism is most effective in our lives and relationships. And when we partner with two or three or four other couples, it is dynamite! It is always more effective than everybody out there by themselves.

The fourth miracle of community is the protection. In chapter 16 of John, Jesus says in verse one, "I have told you these things so that you won't fall away." The word for not falling away in the Greek word *scandalon* means a "trap stick." Do you remember ever trying to catch a rabbit with a box held up by a stick and with a string attached to the stick? You know the plan was to lure the rabbit under the box with bait of lettuce or carrots and then pull the string connected to the stick. That was a trap stick. Christ saw the potential for His disciples to be tricked or lured into spiritual traps. We all have blind spots that are areas of temptations that we do not see without the discernment of other Christians. Some of us may be following a trail of lettuce right now. In many churches, Christians are often tripped up and backslidden for weeks or even months before any one even notices! The devil

then whispers in their ear that no one notices or cares! A Christian education class or cell group provides a safe place for people to be open and transparent about temptation. In 1996 a survey was compiled on the relationship of cell systems and the level of divorce. They found that divorce dramatically decreased when the people get involved in a small group!



The fifth miracle of community is the multiplied Prayer within that group. Finally in John 17, Jesus makes the final benefit known to us in the area of prayer. This chapter is known as the High Priestly prayer of Christ where He intercedes for His disciples.

Can any of us adequately pray for a church family? Or even a prayer chain? We can however, easily pray for a small group of believers with whom we are vitally connected to! All it takes is two to get the job done. Matthew 18:19-20 says, "I also tell you this: If two of you agree down here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you."



Our role in Christian education is to find ways for all of us to become connected to our church family and the God we love. For our church, we have taken the step to establish a vibrant cell system in addition to our weekly Sunday morning programming. The pilot program has succeeded in connecting those involved and in the month of October we plan to start six more groups. Whether you use traditional Sunday school programming or small group systems, what we too often lack is community.

Carl Conner's illustration in *Leadership* may best explain community. "A few winters ago, heavy snows hit North Carolina. Following a wet, six inch snowfall, it was interesting to see the effect along Interstate 40. Next to the highway stood several large groves of tall, young pine trees. The branches were bowed down with the heavy snow—so low that branches from one tree were often leaning against the trunk or branches of another. Where trees stood along, however, the effect of the heavy snow was different. The branches had become heavier and heavier, and since there were no other trees to lean against, the branches snapped. They lay on the ground, dark and alone in the cold snow." When the storms of life hit, we need to be standing close to other Christians. The closer we stand, the more we will be able to hold up.

What Changes are Necessary for Effective Sunday school Today?

by Dan Bennett

Experts indicate that Sunday School has past its season of effectiveness and may never again be useful in building the church. Yet, we see annually a flooding of resources, methods and technology that continue to promote Sunday school as the tool to bring them in. Which opinion do we embrace?

Could it be that in our ever changing culture that Sunday school like so many other dynamics, has simply lost its' purpose. That we have so focused on changing methods and formats we've forgotten the reason Sunday school was so effective. That in our attempt to freshen up the Sunday school hour we are frightened to change with positive methods that which would still meet the needs and were the purposes from it's inception.

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Researchers have indicated that teachers no longer can be the instructor of the masses, but participants require a move to a shepherd, one who not only is an example but also feeds and protects with healing salve of God's presence. If these transitions aren't made, how purposeful can any method be? Reaching has to be the focus and a willingness to change methods if action required.

The purpose of Sunday school has been also a place for caring. In the changing culture caring on Sunday morning may look different. Coffee pots, overhead projectors and open discussion fellowship must replace the lecture and enrollment mentality to ensure the caring to have its' effectiveness in people's lives. They want involvement and practical principles given to balance their spiritual journey in existing or solid classes. Sunday school thus becomes part of small group ministry in many ways that allow caring to be consistent, just like Jesus would do it!

The purpose of Sunday school is the teaching tool of the church; but yesterdays tool can't be useful for tomorrow's ministry.

If adult classes use curriculum that is not functional as well as centered on Biblical truth, groups will lose the desire to participate. The teaching dynamic has always been about lives transformed by the power of Christ which occurs when the Body of Christ (church) exercise the gifts of the Spirit with each other. Friends, that best happens where there is interaction and sharing that allows God freedom.

Surveys report people desire that kind of group today, where teaching methods are open and response and topics are supportive to live today. Statistics continue to prove to us that not everyone who attends church the first time makes a decision for Jesus and that they will not come back if are not any relationships. There is little doubt that the approach Sunday school took in the past will not work, for people are intimidated by what and who they do not know. The Sunday school's groups that are willing to invest in lives, building relationships and encouraging the safety of seeking answers without condemnation will cause natural attraction that draws people to them. It is this kind of Sunday school group that becomes one of God's most valued outreach efforts simply by opening their arms to win others to Jesus Christ and maintain the purpose intended for Sunday school.