

T.E.A.C.H.

Stop Growing Today-Stop Teaching Tomorrow

by Dan Harrison

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Howard Hendricks said, "If you stop growing today, you stop teaching tomorrow." We need to teach from the overflow of our lives because people prefer drinking from a living stream. Henry Ford said, "Anyone who stops learning is old, whether twenty or eighty."

If we are going to be effective in helping others encounter God we must be careful that we don't settle for too little of Him ourselves. If we are experiencing God personally, freshly, and deeply we are drinking from a moving stream. That will guarantee that we have something worth sharing with those who sit under our teaching.

Teachers who teach from a moving stream are inherently more interesting than those who teach from a reservoir. John Dana's understanding of this caused him to write, "He who dares to teach must never cease to learn." What are you learning these days? What are you reading that is stimulating you to experience new growth? What are the most important books you have read in the last year?

Howard Hendricks tells the story about a place in their home where they marked the growth of their children. One day, his daughter, promised that she would grow while her daddy was gone on a trip. She met him at the airport and said, "Daddy! Come home quick! We gotta see how much I grewed!" Later that evening she asked her dad a question that he will remem-

ber for the rest of his life: "Daddy, why do big people stop growing?"

You will not be able to avoid stagnation in your life if you fail to grow. James Ray offers three suggestions for continued growth in the key areas of our lives. The three keys are study, application and repetition.

We all tend to be creatures of habit to one degree or another. Because of this reality I am going to make the assumption, if you have lived at least twenty years or more, that you have ingrained thought patterns and accompanying behaviors that you are very comfortable with. You will have to be intentional in the pursuit of fresh information if you are to reprogram your mind and grow beyond this comfort zone. Jesus said in John 8:32, "You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Knowing the truth is the end result of an intentional focus of our intellect and energy in studying God's word. But **study** is the first step.

Second, after study and acquisition of new information you **MUST** go out and immediately **apply the information** in to your life. The Bible clearly teaches us that just knowing something is not the same as making application of that truth to our lives. Only when we apply what we are learning do we gain the ability to ingrain those new thoughts and new actions in the form of new habits. This is often the most difficult of

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the three keys so it is vitally important to put new information into action within 24 hours or less of exposure. If you go much beyond the first 24-hours without applying what you have learned the likelihood of it ever impacting your life is slim to none.

The third key is **repetition** and it involves re-studying the same material until you internalize it and own it. Have you ever re-read a book and discovered that you missed important insights the first time through? You will continuously find that each revisit exposes something that you didn't see before. This is not because the material has changed...but because you have changed. Each time through the material you see something different because YOU are different.

To be able to teach something fresh tomorrow you must learn something fresh today. Where in your life do you need to experience fresh truth? Study it, apply what you are learning and then revisit it often enough to internalize it. With this approach you will be to KNOW the truth...and the truth will set you free!

Does the Sunday School A Have Bright Future? by Elmer Towns

Sunday school is facing some of the most serious challenges of its life. Attendance is down, it's hard to recruit teachers and those who volunteer don't want to spend time in training and planning. Facilities are inadequate and out of date. Most churches have few teaching resources and little money to buy up-to-date aids. And it hasn't even thought about the computer, Internet, PowerPoint presentations or moving into the 21st century electronically.



Attendance seems to be down in most Sunday schools and up in a few. Dry lectures seem to be out, while enjoyable learning activities are in. However, can we build a biblical Sunday school by just making it fun? According to one observer, *"The more enjoyable we make Sunday school, the fewer children seem to attend."*

Some pastors are concerned because they can't get new visitors or new Christians into Sunday school classes, and faithful attenders of the past seem to drop out as they get older.

Sunday school busing, which was a dominant outreach thirty years ago, no longer seems effective; nor can we get people to attend Sunday school with contests or campaigns. Not as many care about having the largest banana split in the city or being called the fastest growing Sunday school in their county. There are no new gimmicks on the horizon to re-vitalize Sunday school.

However, as Sunday school is changing, let's examine the change to see how we can turn some of these negatives into positives.

1. ***Sunday school is changing from being the steeple of the church to its foundation.*** The steeple is the most visible part of the church, and so, in the past, the Sunday school was visible in its campaigns, buses, and systematic visitations carried on by teachers. But Sunday schools no longer attract a larger attendance than the morning worship service. As a matter of fact, the average worship service attendance has more than 25



percent larger attendance from the Sunday school. Visitors do not usually attend Sunday school; usually they attend the worship service. Let's turn this obstacle into a wheel of progress. After visitors attend the worship service, let's recruit them into Sunday school classes where they are grounded in Bible teaching and Christian living. Let's make the Sunday school of the future the foundation of the church that becomes the place where believers are grounded in doctrine and godly living. The year 1971 seems to be the transitional year when worship attendance passed Sunday School attendance. Sociologists call this a tip-point. Prior to that year, Sunday school attendance was larger. It seemed that many pastors were constantly encouraging people to remain for the morning worship. Now, we must reverse the process. Pastors must motivate people to come early next week for Sunday School.

2. ***Sunday school is changing from the reaching arm to the nurturing arm of the church.***

Traditionally, Sunday school is defined by four points; (a) the reaching arm, (b) the teaching arm, (c) the winning arm, and (d) the nurturing arm of the church. As such, the Sunday school of the past has had a strong evangelistic outreach,



primarily through Sunday school campaigns. When I used to ask a church audience how many were won to Christ through Sunday school, many hands went up. Today, less than 10 percent say that the Sunday school was influential in bringing them to Christ. Sunday school is no longer thought of as an evangelistic outreach for the church. Also, teachers do not perceive their primary role as evangelists; and not many have a

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burden to win their pupils to Christ. They perceive themselves as educators.

The Sunday school should not throw in the towel on evangelism. Recently, I conducted a survey of 649 adults at a Sunday school convention.

I asked them to respond with a show of hands how many were converted through the influence of media, i.e., preaching the gospel by TV, radio, magazines, tracts, billboards, etc. Two percent lifted their hands. Then I asked how many were converted through the ministry of a pastor. Six percent raised their hands. Next, I asked how many were saved through the organized visitation, street meetings, intentional evangelism, etc. Again, six percent lifted their hands. When I asked how many were saved through the influence of a friend or relative, more than 80 percent lifted their hands. Sunday school can be an effective evangelistic outreach when members will network their friends into a Bible study group where they can hear the Word of God and be saved. Then as a result of *life-style evangelism* and the follow-up of class members, these people are not only won to Jesus Christ, but bonded to a church through the Sunday school. Hence, the Sunday school is becoming the nurturing arm for bonding people to the church and Christ.



3. **Sunday school is changing from front door to side door evangelism.** Front door evangelism is inviting people into the church where they can hear the gospel and be converted. This is also called *inviting evangelism*



or *event evangelism*. This means people are converted as a result of a sermon or a Sunday school lesson. Statistics reveal that *front door evangelism* is not nearly as effective as *relationship evangelism*.

But don't completely rule out *front door evangelism*, some will get saved. However, as Americans become more concerned about their relationship to one another, *side door evangelism* can network friends to the gospel through classes, cell groups, and special ministries for the retarded, the deaf, the divorced, single parents or other people with special needs in the church. The key is to find hurting people and offer them help. *Side door evangelism* is reaching people through special ministry to their needs.

4. **Sunday school is changing from its image of children only to a balanced ministry to children and adults.** Before 1971, 39 percent of the Sunday school population were adults. But this has changed, today more than 51 percent of the Sunday school population adults. You can no longer think of Sunday school as only a place for flannelgraph stories for children.

You must think of it as a place for adult Bible classes and fellowship groups. In the tip-point year of 1971, adult attendance finally passed children in the Sunday school population. Now that there are more adults, we should not minimize our emphasis to children but balance our endeavors to reach and teach both children and adults.

One way to balance the outreach to children and adults is to evaluate our resources. The average Sunday school invests 70 to 80 percent of its budget, staff, and educational space on children, yet adults represent 51 percent of its population. Let's do more with adults, but not minimize our efforts to children.



At a Sunday school convention in North Carolina, I asked approximately four hundred pastors their opinion as to what age group in their Sunday school was growing. Only six pastors indicated that their Sunday schools were growing because of children. Six pastors indicated that their Sunday schools were growing because of youth. Only four pastors said their Sunday schools were growing because of senior saints' ministries. However, more than two hundred pastors indicated that their churches were growing in the young adult area. While that is both important and wonderful, approximately two hundred said their Sunday schools were not growing.

Young adults, ages eighteen to thirty, have been considered a hard age to reach with the gospel. However, a recent sociological survey studies the many changes that young adults are going through. While changes sometime hurt church attendance, there is the other side. When people go through changes, they are open to the gospel. These transitions make young adults receptive and responsive to the gospel. These changes include choosing a college, choosing a life partner, choosing a place to live after college, choosing a job, and deciding to have children. Usually the change-process starts over as they assume new jobs and new homes.

5. **Sunday school is changing from an instructional center to a shepherding ministry.** Many are recruited as Sunday school teachers because of their love for teaching. However, if education were the only objective of the Sunday school, then a teacher who communicates Bible content can rightly feel that when his pupils know the lesson, he/she has finished the task. However, Sunday schools have a much broader objective than education.

They have a shepherding task that must be carried out. A Sunday school teacher is a shepherd; he/she is the extension of pastoral ministry into the life of the pupils. Everything the pastor is to the larger church flock, the Sunday school teacher is to the Sunday school flock.

When a Sunday school teacher gets a burden to shepherd pupils rather than just instructing them in biblical content, he or she will be transformed in passion and purpose. A shepherd is first of all a leader or an example to the flock. His life modeling influence will do more to communicate the gospel than simply telling Bible stories. Secondly, a shepherd tends or protects the sheep, which involves the ministry of counseling, visiting absentees, and making oneself available to talk about their problems. When a Sunday school pupil backslides, a teacher/shepherd goes to restore them. A teacher/shepherd has a ministry of intercession for his/her pupils. Recently, my wife attended a Sunday school class of forty-three adults in the family room of a home in a subdivision in Modesto, California. The class was studying Melchizedek. Although a simple, topic, it motivated many individuals before the teacher finally stood to begin giving his thoughts.



The modern adult Sunday school class must have three things. **First**, a *coffee pot* (cold drinks or juice for younger people). Not that the refreshments attract visitors, but coffee allows people to fellowship before class begins and promotes informality that leads to sharing during the class. **Second**, modern adults classes need an *overhead projector* that allows people to see an outline, read a question, or focus their attention on the topic. This electronic teaching aid is a modern tool that reaches young adults who are a product of the electronic generation. **Third**, there must be *questions* to stimulate thoughts, discussion and involvement. Even Jesus used questions in His teaching. The difference between mediocrity and success in teaching is involvement by the student in the learning process, and a good question will get involvement.

7. ***Sunday school is changing from emphasis on enrollment to the open hand of fellowship.*** There was a time in the past when enrollment figures were some of the most important statistics in a Sunday school. As a matter of record, most teachers told

visitors that if they attended for three weeks in a row, their name would be placed on the roll book. Enrollment was an important figure; it was gathered and carefully kept by Sunday school secretaries and reported annually for denominational records. Enrollment meant that the pupil belonged to the Sunday school and was accepted into its ranks. Today, many of the major denominations and independent churches have stopped gathering and reporting enrollment figures (except the Southern Baptists, who use it as a vital technique in their outreach). Most Sunday schools offer an open hand of fellowship to anyone who visits the class and try to make him or her feel as much a part of the class on their first visit as any other member. The open hand approach indicates that anyone who attends is a first-class member, just as much as the person who has been there for ten years.

8. ***Sunday school can't use yesterday's tools in today's world and be in ministry tomorrow.***



Some things such as our commitment to God and His word must never change, while other things constantly change. The mature believer must know what things to cling to, and what things to give up. The word of God never changes, and Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. We must never compromise biblical principles. But programs can change because they represent a technique used to reach people through the meeting of their needs. When a person's perception of his need changes, the church must use a new program to reach a person through the new need in his life.

The biblical principles of preaching, teaching, soul winning, and ministry never change. But programs and techniques change. The original Sunday school was conducted on Sunday afternoon and taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. Now since public schools teach these topics, Sunday school no longer meets basic educational needs. Public attitudes have changed toward Sunday afternoons, so it is difficult to attract people to Sunday school in the afternoon. Most Sunday schools are held on Sunday mornings. So, Sunday school programs change, but the biblical principles that make Sunday school essential have not changed.



The wise Sunday School leader will test all things by the Word of God. Some programs have served their usefulness; they should no longer receive priority treatment.

New programs are not good just because they are new and old programs are useless just because they are old.

Does the Sunday school have a bright future? Its historic purpose must not change. The Sunday school must reach, teach, win, and mature its pupils in Christ. As long as the Sunday school remains a channel for the Word of God, it will meet needs and have a future. As long as the Sunday school curriculum is based on the Word of God, people must attend its classes and support its programs. As long as Sunday school is based on the Word of God, it has a bright future.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A NEW MINISTRY TO CHILDREN
BY Neil MacQueen

The following are 12 characteristics of a new ministry to children. Neil MacQueen is a Presbyterian minister, Christian educator, President of Sunday Software Inc., and leader in the Workshop Rotation Model movement for reinventing Sunday School. Part of Neil's ministry is addressing current and future issues of Sunday School and Christian Education. Neil's web address is www.sundaysoftware.com. His email is neil@sundaysoftware.com



1. Do less "whole group" programming that is year-round and facility based. This will open up time for other opportunities to go out and be where the kids are. New venues will create new opportunities for interaction and keep us from offering only a classroom based model. (Example: a children's group I know pledged to attend an event which each member was already involved in. The group would show up at a soccer games to watch individuals play, (dances, school competitions, etc.)
2. Think beyond Sunday morning. Organize opportunities to meet a variety of options and schedules. Provide opportunities that have defined start and end dates. Studies show that people find it easier to join newly forming groups, rather than break into existing ones.
3. Create opportunities that include the children's parents at times, rather than viewing parents as "the ride to and from the program.
4. Have a one-on-one component where leaders go where kids live and play. Involve mentors, and youth as role models.
5. Strive to match each child with an opportunity to serve/help in the life of the church.

6. Expand the number of ritual/rites of passage which children/youth can pass through, rather than lumping it all into one Confirmation behemoth. Keep these "rites of passage" easy to participate in (no 10 week courses), but special enough to draw wide interest.
7. Individual churches must shape their ministry to children in ways that capitalize on real strengths-not imagined ones. A real strength in the church might be its tradition of camping, or service, or the presence of college students, for example. Such strengths present unique opportunities to those churches.
8. Use technology to "data-base" contact information about kids and their activity/interests. No more losing kids through the cracks.
9. Planning meetings will include focusing on the lives and needs of individuals, not just program details.
10. Develop new standards for measuring success and failure. Five quality encounters a year can have a greater impact than 25 weekly attendances in a classroom.
11. Recognize that some children/youth are ready for exceptional commitment and provide a track for them to follow (by analogy, schools have found that gifted students need gifted approaches or they drift off).
12. All children's ministry in the future must be equally focused on family ministry, and in particular, encouraging and TRAINING parents to talk about faith in the home and in daily living.



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Journeyland at Winchester CCCU

by Children's Pastor Jeni Sanders

In 1990 Neil MacQueen began exploring a new approach to Sunday School at his church. He called it the *Workshop Rotation Model*. Here's a brief description:

1. Classrooms are redesigned into creative, media-inspired, kid-pleasing workshops that teach Bible stories. The workshops can include: art, drama, audio-visuals, computer, Bible games, puppets and music.



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- Classes or groups rotate to new workshops one week each for four weeks, the "rotation" period. Workshop teachers do not rotate. They stay put in the workshop, repeating the lesson to a new group of children each week (with some age-appropriate modifications).
- During that four week period only one Bible story is taught. The entire rotation-every workshop, every week-is focused on learning that one Bible story.



At the Winchester Church of Christ in Christian Union we have been doing this Rotation Model for two years. We use this model for our church time with the kids instead of Sunday school. We call it **Journeyland**.

Here's a guideline of a typical Sunday: Upon arrival the child will be greeted by our committed volunteers, given a passport (nametag), and assigned to a group. Each group has a shepherd guide that will stay with them throughout their journey. For the first 10 minutes we expend some of that youthful energy into songs. Half aerobics, half singing ... the kids have a ball! The children are assigned to an age-appropriate group that they will travel with to one of

four designated stations — crafts, drama, games and movies. Each is meant to give a different perspective of a bible story and to help them lay a spiritual foundation that they can build their lives on. Upon completing their weekly activity, we bring them back together for their journey wrap up.

We have had great responses from the teachers because we ask them for shorter commitments, four to five weeks at a time. We place them in a workshop most suitable to their skills. They get better and better each week as they repeat and modify their lesson.

Kids love the **Workshop Rotation Model**. They get something new to look forward to each week. Imagine this: we now actually have kids waking their parents up on Sunday mornings so they can get to church!

The best place to start to look for more rotation resources is the official **Workshop Rotation Model** website: www.rotation.org. There you will find information about a rotation newsletter, free lesson sets, articles, and seminar information. Another rotation resource is Neil MacQueen and Melissa Armstrong-Hansche's book called **Workshop Rotation**.