

# SUNDAY SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY & VISION

## Sunday School Philosophy

Every church must decide what it will do with the Great Commission and how it will do it. The fact is, the Head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ, already has decided what we are to do:

*"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).*

It is now up to us to determine how we should accomplish it.

## Sunday School Vision Statement

*To lead my local church to be a New Testament church by involving our people in the twofold mission of the Great Commission:*

- 1. Evangelizing the unsaved.***
- 2. Discipling the saved.***

Every organization must have a vision or dream that gives it a purpose and mission. This vision gives direction and sets the agenda for the work of the organization. What then is the mission of the Sunday School? Its number one purpose is to fulfill the Great Commission. The Sunday School is the church organized to do the work of the Great Commission. All other organizations within the church (discipleship training, choirs, etc.) recruit its people from those who are already part of the church fellowship. The Sunday School alone is the organization with the task of reaching people. Therefore, it is imperative the main objective for the Sunday School be reaching lost and unchurched people. We must have a heart for the Great Commission. If we do not, then not only will the Sunday School regress but so will the other organizations within the church which enlist those who have been brought in through the Sunday School ministry. Therefore, if the Sunday School does not reach people, then the whole church suffers. When we lose sight of our purpose, then we become maintenance-driven instead of mission-driven. As someone has put it: "The main thing is to keep the main thing, the main thing!"

## **Sunday School Vision Strategy**

How we view our Sunday School will have everything to do with what we do with it. I believe we need a new vision of what Sunday School is and what it can do. Sunday School is not just a program: it is a ministry. Sunday School is not just a weekly event; it is a strategy. You see, we would all agree that we are to be about the Great omission. But the real issue is *how*. Sunday School is *how*. It is how we tangibly and practically flesh out the Great Commission. Question: If Sunday School is not how you flesh out the Great Commission, then how do we accomplish it? Is this method as effective as Sunday School? This I know, Sunday School has a track record that has been proven over the decades. Many say Sunday School is no longer effective and now fails us. My question is: Has Sunday School failed us, or have we failed Sunday School? The Sunday School Vision Strategy will answer the question how. How can we go about fulfilling the Great Commission? I see two crucial elements within the Sunday School structure that are musts if we are to effectively become more involved in the work of evangelizing and discipling. They are:

### ***1. Developing New Leaders***

### ***2. Birthing New Units***

If we have a vision statement which is the driving force behind a purpose-driven Sunday School, then we must have a strategy to bring this vision into a reality - the strategy being the small steps we must take in order to accomplish our predetermined goal. The two steps we must take are developing new leaders and birthing new units.

#### ***Step 1: Developing New Leaders***

If the key to reaching new people is new units, then what is the key to birthing new units? Having new leaders! We must always be in the process of developing new leadership within the Sunday School organization. Groups created based on need alone will soon fizzle out. Genuine need must be coupled with genuine leadership for a new unit to survive. Leadership is the foundational support of any new unit. Everything rises and falls with leadership. Many new units which are birthed often are placed in an environment to fail instead of succeed because the leadership base was not in place. I strongly believe in birthing new units in order to grow, but I just as strongly believe the leaders must first be developed and in place.

#### ***Step 2: Birthing New Units***

If Sunday School is to continually reach lost and unchurched people, then we must be creating new units (new classes) - whether new classes or new care groups within those classes - to facilitate new people. New units grow faster than old ones. The old formula is still true: New Units = New People = New Growth.

## **Sunday School Vision Structure**

The Sunday School must be structured to carry out the tasks of the organization. As mentioned in the *Sunday School Vision Statement*, the number one task of the organization is to reach lost and unchurched people. However, there are two other tasks the Sunday School should pursue. Therefore, the three tasks of Sunday School are:

**1. Reach *people* for Christ and church membership.**

**2. Teach *people* God's Word.**

**3. Minister to *people's* needs.**

Knowing our tasks, we can now set in place a leadership structure to support the objectives of the organization.

**1. *Teachers*** Who will teach and be the leader for the class.

**2. *Outreach Leaders*** Who will lead the class in reaching the lost and unchurched.

**3. *Care Group Leaders*** Who will care for and pastor the people in their group.

Obviously, there are many other worthy endeavors which could be pursued within the organization. However, we unconsciously subvert the main things we need to do when we add additional tasks. Our tasks, like our *Vision Statement*, need to be short, to the point, and easily memorized to afford us the opportunity to know it by heart and center it on the bull's eye of the target. We need to know exactly what we are aiming for. Our tasks need to be aligned with a leader who will be responsible for that task. Therefore, we will align our leaders with one of the three tasks as follows:

Teachers Teach people God's Word.

Outreach Leaders Reach people for Bible study.

Care Group Leaders Minister to people's needs.

Each Sunday School class should have a Class Team consisting of a Teacher, Outreach Leader(s), and Care Group Leaders. The Outreach Leader(s) and Care Group Leaders will be accountable to the Teacher who will be accountable to their respective Division Director. All Teachers, Outreach Leaders, and Care Group Leaders become part of the Sunday School Leadership Team and are expected to meet at the Sunday School Leadership Meetings and at their Class Planning Meetings.