

## One Mission—My Mission

**More than a Program**—Long before it was sponsored by local churches or embraced by denominations, Sunday School was a missionary movement that cut across—and sometimes against—the grain of traditional church structures.

**A Missionary Movement**—The Sunday School movement took root in England around 1780. A newspaper publisher, Robert Raikes, is generally credited with accelerating the movement when he established classes to teach child laborers to read and write on their only day off each week using the Bible as the primary textbook.

**The Idea of Sunday School in America**—In the infant United States, this movement was predictably “Americanized.”

**Sunday School in Urban America**—The movement gained momentum when the idea was embraced in America’s largest and most influential city of the day: Philadelphia.

**From Social Gospel to Social Evangelism**—In America, Sunday School would expand its work well beyond merely teaching the poorer classes to read and write. Sunday School became an evangelical enterprise.

**The Mississippi Valley Enterprise**—The goal was to “establish a Sunday School in every destitute place where it is practicable, throughout the Valley of the Mississippi.” Funds were raised. Missionaries were enlisted. Sunday Schools were established in 5,000 communities.

**Sunday School Missionaries**—Most Sunday School missionaries raised their own support, sometimes returning East to raise funds and speak at Sunday School conventions.

**Fast-forward to Today**—Motorcycle Sunday School Mission operates in the African bush today with similar goals. Sidewalk Sunday Schools operate with a similar strategy, taking Sunday School to the kids of inner cities in America and around the world. Their goals are not too dissimilar from that of Robert Raikes in England or Stephen Paxson, perhaps the best known American Sunday School missionary.

**Schools to Churches**—You can probably predict what happened as communities grew—and grew up. Sunday Schools, which already commonly incorporated singing, desired to add a sermon, which required a preacher—and many new churches were born.

**Your Place in the History of Sunday School**—You are a part of a movement that has been a mighty tool for transformation in churches, counties, countries, and continents. It is a movement that not only has a remarkable history but also a bright future.

**Where do you fit in this history? Use the reverse side of this handout to respond.**

## His Story—All the Bible for All of Life

How would your church's Bible study (Sunday School) be different if you thought of it as missionary training?

**The Open Group Dilemma**—A missionary Sunday School class operates as an open group: it expects new people every week. Because it expects new people every week, it selects a Bible study curriculum that supports an open group strategy. The Bible study is typically part of a larger unit of study, maybe a whole book of the Bible. Nevertheless, each lesson must also stand on its own if a class is to remain open. Sunday School is remarkably effective at exposing people to all of the Bible for all their lives. That's why Sunday School is foundational discipleship. LifeWay's ongoing Bible Study resources (Sunday School material) are designed in such a way. Any one can come into the class at any point and grasp the truth from that part of God's Word.

**Advanced Training**—Shorter term, closed groups are good and necessary in the life of a healthy church. They're just not Sunday School! A missionary might consider them advanced training. Missionaries need advanced training. Sunday School leaders—and members—need advanced training too, especially if they want to be even more effective missionaries. So what do you do about advanced training?

1. Rate your class on these three elements using the scale below by placing an X on the continuum.

<b>Open</b>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<b>Closed</b>
<b>Ongoing</b>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<b>Short term</b>
<b>Systematic Plan</b>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<div></div>	<b>Whatever</b>

2. What steps do you need to take to improve (move closer to the left) the ratings you gave your class?

3. In the past six months, who has made a commitment to Christ as a result of the work being done by or through your class or class members?

4. How would you describe the teaching that takes place in your class: for knowledge or for training missionaries? Give an example from the past two weeks to illustrate.

## Discovering Our Ministry Focus Group

A. Context

B. Contextualization

1 Corinthians 9:22— “To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some.”

With that in mind, begin to think about the people group God might be directing you to reach as a Sunday School missionary.

People Group(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Unchurched/Unsaved	Unchurched/Saved

A. \_\_\_\_\_ barriers

B. \_\_\_\_\_ barriers

C. \_\_\_\_\_ barriers

D. \_\_\_\_\_ barriers

Based on your findings, what are the implications of these issues?

## Discovering Our Ministry Focus Group

**Describe the ministry focus group in terms of needs.**

A. \_\_\_\_\_ needs

B. \_\_\_\_\_ needs

C. \_\_\_\_\_ needs

**Based on your findings, what are the implications of these issues?**

### *Demographic Issues*

A. Age groups most needed to be reached?

B. Household size?

C. Marital status?

D. Educational level?

E. Median income?

F. Housing type (single family dwelling, apartments, etc)?

G. Occupation?

**Based on your findings, what are the implications of these issues?**

- What does the typical person in your ministry focus group look like?
- How does your ministry focus group impact your evangelistic approach?
- How does your ministry focus group impact when and where you do Bible study?
- How does your ministry focus group impact your efforts to make them Sunday School Missionaries?