

Missionary Sunday School Conference Plan for General Officers

Prepared by:

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Purpose: To provide a two-hour teaching experience for General Officer Sunday School leaders for the purpose of identifying and implementing a strategy for becoming a Missionary Sunday School.

How to use this plan

- For the local church: Use to train General Officer Sunday School leaders during a local church training or kick-off event. This teaching plan could also be adapted and used to train all Sunday School leaders together in several one-hour sessions as part of a local church training or kick-off event or as part of ongoing training.
- For regional and state training: Use to train General Officer Sunday School leaders in state or associational training events.

PREPARE:

Provide the following resources for each participant for use throughout the training:

- Nametags and markers (A nametag template is provided in the zip files for this *2012 Missionary Sunday School Emphasis Kit*.)
- GO Handout 1: Reflections on Chapter 1—One Mission: Transformation
- GO Handout 2: Reflections on Chapter 2—His Story: All the Bible for All of Life
- GO Handout 3: Reflections on Chapter 3—Every Person: The Missionary Principle of the People Group
- GO Handout 4: Reflections on Appendix—Tools of the Missionary Sunday School

Download the following materials:

- Provide one copy of *Missionary Sunday School* by David Francis for each participant. The book is available as a free download or you can purchase copies for \$1.50 each at www.lifeway.com/davidfrancis. The book can also be purchased at the Apple iStore.
- PowerPoint presentation: Missionary Sunday School—General Officers.ppt

Prepare a display of the following resources:

- *Missionary Sunday School* by David Francis
- *Transformational Class* by David Francis
- *Transformational Church* by Ed Stetzer & Thom S. Rainer
- *Transformational Church* DVD Discussion Guide
- Current LifeWay Church Resources Catalog

Prepare the room for learning:

- Arrange the room using round tables with chairs if possible. If not, arrange clusters of three to five chairs. If you meet in a worship area with pews or fixed position chairs, simply have participants turn to the persons around them for the times of discussion.
- Place nametags and markers on the tables/chairs or in a central area for use as participants arrive.
- Place pens/pencils on the tables/chairs.
- Arrange for AV equipment for the optional PowerPoint presentation.

PRESENT:

1. Chapter 1 – One Mission: Transformation (30 min.)

[SLIDE 1]

(2 minutes)

Welcome all participants and make sure everyone has a nametag. Ask conferees to turn to someone they don't know, introduce themselves, and share one thing they'd like to learn today.

(10 minutes)

Use the comments below, coupled with your own knowledge of the book, to present an overview of the preface, introduction, and chapter 1 of *Missionary Sunday School*. Encourage dialogue and questions throughout the presentation. (The presentation can be equally effective with or without the PowerPoint slides.)

[SLIDE 2]

This is the second book in the series *Transformational Class: Transformational Church Goes to Sunday School*.

[SLIDE 3]

Transformational Class attempted to suggest answers to the question: *What might a Sunday School class or small group look like if it demonstrated the seven elements found in Transformational Churches?*

This book focuses on *Missionary Mentality*. The question attempted to be answered is: *What might a Sunday School look like if it saw itself as a missionary enterprise: thinking and acting out of a missionary mindset?*

The hope is that this book will be sufficient to motivate your class or group to want to start thinking like missionaries and to provide some ideas for beginning that exciting journey.

[SLIDE 4]

Missionary Sunday School is based on three big ideas: One Mission, His Story, Every Person.

The *One Mission* that runs through the remarkable history of the Sunday School movement is *transformation*: personal spiritual transformation, transformation of churches, and cultural transformation in the communities surrounding them. The stack pole for the missionary Sunday School is *His Story*. Its textbook is *the Bible* and the Bible is for *Every Person*! Persons at every age and every stage of life.

[SLIDE 5]

Sunday School began as a missionary movement designed to reach, teach, and minister to persons who were outside the church and far from God. In a missionary Sunday School, that's still the mission.

[SLIDE 6]

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 movement gained momentum in Philadelphia. Led by influential bishop William White, The First Day Society of Philadelphia was organized in 1790. A number of other Sunday School “societies” were organized in the United States with goals of literacy education for the poorer classes using the Bible as a primary text.

Sunday School expanded its work well beyond merely teaching the poorer classes to read and write. Sunday School became an evangelical enterprise.

Most Sunday School missionaries raised their own support. They would go from farm to farm or house to house talking to families about Sunday School, with the goal of persuading the families to organize a Sunday School.

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.

Stephen Paxson was America’s most famous Sunday School missionary. He once organized over 40 schools in a period of 40 days!

Sunday School missionaries used Sunday School papers as important tools in their work and carried catalogs that offered books published and/or distributed by the Sunday School unions.

In our church, state, or denomination, who is known as a “Sunday School Man” (or woman!)?

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.

When Sunday School is done right—with excellence and with a missionary purpose—it continues to be a proven and effective way of reaching the lost in our communities, involving the saved in service, and mobilizing the local church for ministry. Sunday School (people meeting in a small group for structured Bible study before or after a worship experience) works and works well...if the leaders are willing to do the work. It is not easy, but nothing worth doing ever is.

The Sunday School story is a missionary story. There are two major streams in that story, the church school and the missionary school. The first focuses primarily on people already connected with the church. Where it is practiced best, it consists of classes that are open groups; that is, they expect new people every week and create systems of outreach, ministry, and Bible Study to that end. The second stream, on the other hand, is comprised mostly of people—typically kids—who rarely or never attend church. In 19th century America, mission Sunday Schools were started on behalf of the children and classes for adults—most typically the parents—often followed. But adult groups never were first or primary.

Millions of individuals have been transformed spiritually by the missionary ministry of Sunday School. And churches have been transformed by the missionary ministry of Sunday School, but perhaps the most amazing aspect of the history of the Sunday School movement has been its remarkable impact in terms of cultural transformation, especially in America.

Your Sunday School (or its functional equivalent) is part of a movement with a great missionary heritage. Being a missionary Sunday School does not require a radical new direction as much as it requires a radical reconnection. To a movement ignited by a missionary mentality. To a

movement fueled by a transformational textbook: the Bible. Exploring *His Story*, the story of redemption captured in the Word of God, is the primary vehicle by which Sunday School's *One Mission* is accomplished. It is a Book no one completely masters this side of heaven. The Bible is worthy of study throughout the span of life: from birth to heaven! A missionary Sunday School therefore operates with this maxim: *all the Bible for all of life*.

[SLIDE 7]

(10 minutes)

Group participants in clusters of three to five people and direct them to discuss the six reflection questions found on GO Handout 1.

(8 minutes)

Call for brief reports from groups making sure all six reflection questions are addressed. Encourage participants to work further on the reflection questions at home to continue their learning. Encourage participants to engage other leaders and members from their class or Sunday School in conversations about these questions.

[SLIDE 8]

2. Chapter 2 – His Story: All the Bible for All of Life (25 min.)

(7 minutes)

Use the comments below, coupled with your own knowledge, to present an overview of chapter 2 of *Missionary Sunday School*. Encourage dialogue and questions throughout the presentation.

No one's story is complete until it has intersected with His Story, which happens best in a community being enriched by the stories of others. A Sunday School class, one that would be a transformational community, introduces and centers not only on those stories but also on His Story—the Bible. In many Sunday School classes, Bible study is an end unto itself. In a missionary Sunday School class, the purpose of Bible study is to equip members to be missionaries!

[SLIDE 9]

If you were appointed as an international missionary, you'd go through basic training. One of the primary outcomes of this training is to acknowledge, affirm, and embrace being missionaries.

How would the Bible study in your class be different if you thought of it as missionary training? A class of missionaries learns for the purpose of being equipped—not just to understand His Story, but also to share His Story in work and deed. It is about learning to live it.

Perhaps the most important skill required for reaching people effectively is the ability to communicate in their language. The most significant and powerful missionary tool is the Bible—His Story—communicated in the language of the people being reached.

The Bible is an inexhaustible source of new understandings, insight, or application. This Book—His Story—can literally be studied from birth to heaven.

People at different ages and stages of life are capable of understanding His Story in different ways. The Bible relates to every stage of our life. This is just one reason we need to provide Bible study groups for people of all ages.

His Story unfolds in the Bible from the beginning in the first chapter of Genesis through the new beginning in the last chapter of Revelation. That's why Sunday School practices grading, organizing as many classes as possible and practical so that the Bible might be studied among a group of people with similar learning abilities and life issues.

LifeSpan guides how we think about the development of Bible study plans and materials for use in Sunday School. LifeWay publishes materials for babies, for retired adults, and everyone in between. All with the promise of helping people explore the "whole counsel of God" several times throughout the span of their lives.

You can create your own plan or use one of the plans created by an organization like LifeWay. But regardless of the plan you choose, be sure it takes into account the whole counsel of God's Word in a realistic and fair timeframe. Once you select the plan, stick with it.

A missionary Sunday School class operates as an open group: it expects new people every week. Sunday School is remarkably effective at exposing people to all the Bible for all their lives. That's why Sunday School is foundational discipleship.

Another critically important distinction is that Sunday School classes are ongoing. Because of its ongoing nature, the class can take a systematic approach to the study of His Story. The teaching/learning materials are not intended as a substitute for the Bible, but rather as a plan to study it, learn it, teach it—all of it—over the course of a lifetime, at a level appropriate for the age and stage of each learner's life.

Shorter term, closed groups are good and necessary in the life of a healthy church. They're just not Sunday School! Sunday School leaders—and members—need advanced training too, especially if they want to be even more effective missionaries.

A D-group or discipleship group is a closed group usually for a short-term course of study that is more intense in nature than an open group like a Sunday School class. Guard against turning Sunday School classes into D-groups because the class may lose its missionary purpose.

Is it the purpose of the Sunday School to disciple those already in the church? Or, is it the purpose of the Sunday School to assimilate new members by connecting them to a class to enjoy fellowship and ministry along with systematic Bible study? Or, is it the purpose of the Sunday School to reach out to the unchurched? The answer is yes! A missionary Sunday School attempts all three, especially distinguished by the third—outreach and evangelism. A missionary Sunday School believes there should be a Sunday School class for *Every Person*. *One Mission*: transformation. *His Story*: all the Bible for all of Life. *Every Person*.

[SLIDE 10]

Reflections on Chapter 2

(10 minutes)

Group participants in different clusters and assign them to discuss the six reflection questions found on GO Handout 2.

(8 minutes)

Call for brief reports from groups making sure all six reflection questions are addressed. Give special attention to questions 2 & 6. Encourage participants to work further on the reflection questions at home to continue their learning and to engage other leaders and members from their class or Sunday School in conversations about these questions.

Break (10 minutes)

3. Chapter 3 – Every Person: The Missionary Principle of the People Group (25 min.)

[SLIDE 11]

(5 minutes)

Use the comments below, coupled with your own knowledge, to present an overview of chapter 3 of *Missionary Sunday School*. Encourage dialogue and questions throughout the presentation.

The missionary Sunday School is satisfied only when everyone within its reach has access to a Bible study group appropriate for his or her age, stage of life, and ability to learn. Until that happens, there is always more work to do.

[SLIDE 12]

Objections to Sunday School for every person: “We don’t need *those* kids in our church, and certainly not around *our* kids.” “Sunday School divides families and supplants the parents’ role as the chief discipler of children.” But Sunday School is still a powerful force today and should be accessible for Every Person.

[SLIDE 13]

What people group is your class assigned to reach, teach, and minister to? How does the people group you are trying to reach know that you exist for them?

The question “who are you trying to reach?” is perhaps the basis of all missionary challenges. And perhaps the second most important missionary challenge is learning about that people group—their language, their culture, and their beliefs.

Robert Raikes knew exactly what people group he wanted to impact: poor illiterate kids. Sunday School classes today also need to be crystal clear who they are assigned to reach and teach. Classes with that kind of clarity are well positioned to be missionary Sunday Schools.

God typically gives each of us a heart for the people He wants us to reach. What people group has He assigned to you? Do you love them? Then get to know them!

If you aspire to lead an effective missionary Sunday School class, learn everything you can about the context and culture of the people group to which your class is assigned.

Get to know the boundaries of your assigned mission field and try to focus in on the areas where your people group is found.

Where does your people group live? Where do they congregate? Where are safe places in the mission field where you might encounter your people group? Answers to these type of questions will affect your missionary strategy and efforts.

Learn specifically about the individual people within your group—their needs, backgrounds, aspirations, talents, and gifts; important dates and events in their lives; their story. Everybody has a story. And for the missionary no one’s story is complete until it has intersected with His Story. And this happens best in a community like a Sunday School class!

[SLIDE 14]

Chapter 3 Reflections

(10 minutes)

Group participants in different clusters and assign them to discuss the reflection questions found on GO Handout 3.

(10 minutes)

Call for brief reports from groups making sure all five reflection questions are addressed. Give special attention to questions 3, 4, and 5. Encourage participants to work further on the reflection questions at home to continue their learning. Encourage participants to engage other leaders and members from their class or Sunday School in conversations about these questions.

4. Appendix – Tools of the Missionary Sunday School (25 min.)

[SLIDE 15]

First Contact is a ministry for new and expectant parents. It provides support through prayer, encouragement, and ministry. What other resources might be helpful if you were a missionary to new or expectant parents?

How have you been impacted by Christian literature? How can you use literature effectively as a Sunday School missionary today?

Two key practices marked the work of the early Sunday School missionaries in America's pioneer west—visitation and literature distribution. What came next was another important practice: gathering people together into groups for Bible study. Could these practices work today? How might they be used, adapted, reworked to be effective tools for contemporary Sunday School missionaries?

[SLIDE 16]

The greatest evidence of a fruitful Sunday School is that it expands.

Review these tried-and-true ideas from pages 42-52 of *Missionary Sunday School: The Irreducible Law, The Law of 10, Flake's Formula, The Principle of Three, 3X5=18 Principle, The Two-Year Principle, and Two Solutions.*

An effective method for expanding a Sunday School in a church that is crunched for space is to start an additional Sunday School session. As a general rule, a church that starts a second Sunday School session can gain an additional 60% capacity. A third session will add perhaps another 20-30%. Again, special considerations must be given to each age group. The best motivation for putting up with the challenges of multiple schedules is not to solve space issues. That is usually the reason most churches do it. But there is a better reason: missionary mentality—and a desire to provide for Every Person.

[SLIDE 17]

(10 minutes)

Group participants in different clusters and assign them to discuss the reflection questions found on GO Handout 4.

(15 minutes)

Call for brief reports from groups making sure all five Tools of the Missionary Sunday School are addressed. After each tool is addressed summarize that tool as needed. Encourage participants to work further on their responses to GO Handout 4 at home to continue their learning. Encourage participants to engage other leaders and members from their class or Sunday School in conversations about these tools.

5. Concluding Challenges (5 min.)

Summarize Concluding Challenges (pp. 40-41).

[SLIDE 18]

Missionary Sunday Schools can take place in apartment buildings, housing projects, elementary schools, YMCAs, community centers—anywhere people gather—all across North America. Who would start them? Your class! Or two or three classes working together. Who would they reach? “Those kids.” And maybe their parents. When would they meet? Any day or night of the week, although Sunday afternoon or evening might be a good time.

There are thousands of Unreached People Groups around the world where less than 2 percent of the people are professing Christians. Would your church or class adopt a UPG? Your first step would be simply to learn about them and pray for them. Can you imagine a Sunday School starting among your UPG? Can you imagine it thriving? Can you imagine it starting more and more classes? Reaching more and more people? Can you imagine a church springing forth from that Sunday School? Then other churches? If you can—if you dare to imagine such things—you may be on your way to becoming a missionary Sunday School! Ignited for *One Mission*. Fueled by *His Story*. Concerned about *Every Person*.

Thank everyone for participating and dismiss in prayer.