

LEADERSHIP LESSON 26

DEVELOPING A VISION FOR YOUR SUNDAY SCHOOL

OUTLINE BY JERRI HERRING

HINDSIGHT IS ALWAYS **20/20!** Now that's a practical thing to know. While teaching a class at Middle Tennessee State University I realized I could not identify my students in the back row and I could not read my notes. What a frightening thing for someone in that position. The doctor told me I needed to wear glasses so that my focus in both areas could be increased. I went from no glasses to tri-focals. It took a lot of getting used to but I was able to overcome the feeling of falling off the edge of the world!

Having a **vision** for your Sunday School is a lot like wearing **glasses** for the first time. I saw things more clearly than ever before. Trees actually had leaves not just blurry green things!

How can you develop your vision for your Sunday School?

1. Use **records** and believe them. Go back and look at attendance records for every class. Numbers don't lie. They tell a compelling story. You may have not wanted to recognize that fact that your Sunday School isn't growing. Perhaps you have adopted the "out of sight, out of mind" philosophy. Evaluate every adult class using the following ideas:
 - a. How many people have visited this class one time and never come back?
 - b. Why didn't they come back?
 - c. What plans are in place to get accurate information about folks the first time they attend? Name, address, phone, e-mail?
 - d. How soon are they contacted? By whom? Remember that people expect the staff to contact them but they respond to a contact by a member of the group!
2. Now, armed with the **facts** – and just the facts you can begin a process to envision what you want your Sunday School to be. If you can't verbalize your vision for the Sunday School how will people be able to follow you? If there were no "sacred cows" and there were no barriers from past experiences, good and bad, what do you want your Bible study to be? Is it just a place for Biblical facts to be given, is it a place for belonging, is it to be an ongoing group where fellowship and friendships are valued and held up?
3. Is it possible to **start all over again**? Yes, basically every Baptist church does that every year – we call it a lot of different things...new church year and promotion day. Perhaps it's not really a time but a mind set – your mind set. Perhaps a Bible study group that meets other than Sunday morning at the church house is what is needed. Locate special groups and geographic spots in your community where that might be possible. Is your community made up of senior adults or is there a good mix of young families with children as well as middle age and seniors? Know your community and understand the potential growth that is projected. A visionary always look ahead to what could be. Close your eyes and open them to the community that is 10 years older. What does it look like? Your vision for your Sunday School must include that.

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Find the approach that works best for your people.

Inside church group, outside Bible study groups or BOTH/AND

Read Proverbs 3:6. What does this verse say to you? Write it down and date it!

Open doors and remove barriers that block the work.

Every church has barriers (sacred cows) that keep people from doing the right things.

What are those for you and your church? Write them down and date them!

Count the cost of what must be done in terms of leadership and budget.

If starting a new Bible study group is part of your vision what will you need?

Space to meet

Where?

Person/s to lead

Who?

Potential members

Who? Where are they? What are they like?

Un-complicate the process – remember the KISS principle.

Vision with a purpose. Know the who, what, where, when, and understand the why.

Keep it (the process) simple somehow!

Strive to take your people with you.

Jesus worked hard to lead folks to follow Him. Did everyone? Of course not, but He never lost sight of the importance of taking as many as possible with Him. Being a visionary leader can be a lonely place. Remember there really is a thing called “friendly fire”. Will everyone go with you? NO. However, there are some people who are looking for leadership from you and will follow you. Make a list and begin to pray that God will help you to cast your vision for them and to begin to call out leaders for that vision. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (KJV) *“Pray without ceasing.”*

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