

## **LEADERSHIP LESSON # 66: BUILDING COMMUNITY**

OUTLINE BY GARY HARDIN

When Sunday School classes are developing community, members are becoming **friends**. Authentic **relationships** are developed. Members are connecting with one another. The class has a strong sense of “group.”

What helps a Sunday School class develop this sense of real fellowship, group oneness, and community?

1. **Organize** for care and ministry. Make use of care groups in which each class member and prospect is assigned to a care group. The care group leader functions like a shepherd for the group. The care group leader stays in touch with group members and alerts the class to ministry needs.
2. Make consistent **contacts** with members and prospects. In the typical Sunday School class, 40% or more of the class members might not be present on a given Sunday. Consistent contacts by care group leaders ensure that the class is on top of ministry needs.
3. Provide **ministry skills** training for the Sunday School. How does one make a good hospital visit? How should we minister to someone in crisis? What do we say to people who are grieving? How do we best help someone who’s gone through a divorce? Don’t assume class members have the needed skills to minister to one another. Equip them with skills training.
4. Create a **positive** atmosphere in the class. Avoid put-downs. Affirm people for what they are saying. Create a casual and relaxed setting in the class. Allow members the right to pass and not to share. Refrain from judging one another. Uplift and encourage one another.
5. Practice **inclusion**. Include as many people as possible in class discussions. Value everyone’s opinions. Calling class members by name shows they are recognized and part of the group. Be deliberate to include guests and new members in class activities. Be accepting of all races and classes of people.
6. Have fun together. Class fellowships, parties, and potluck meals create opportunities for class members to get to know one another better, and to **build deeper** relationships. Don’t overlook opportunities for doing ministry projects together as a class.
7. Use the power of your **spoken words**. Our words can bless, build up, and encourage fellow class members. Use words to express thanks and appreciation to class members.

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