

**LESSON ONE – CONTINUED**

Why is it that some Sunday schools grow and others do not? This study reveals that, whatever the cause is, many neglect to implement the principles that impact the potential growth. Keep in mind that the fastest growing Sunday schools implement 9 of the 10 practices, but not all the same 9. Why would all not do this? Could it be that implementing and sustaining multiple practices is a sacrifice that many congregations and members of congregations are not willing to make? Most likely it would take a full-time worker. In short, such effort is often abandoned not because it will not work, but because of the work involved in making it work. “They” (could it be “we”) do not want to do what it will take to grow.

Another study of churches (unidentified) in North America concluded:

Churches with ineffective Sunday schools violate the very principles that make Sunday school a viable organization; they dilute biblical teachings, fail to train effective teachers, replace systematic Bible teaching with other types of group activity, and relegate Sunday school to the status of one more church activity.

If you want to stir up a mountain of resistance, make a genuine push to change “the way we have always done it.” You will meet (by way of suggestion and not limitation):

- leaders who do not want to participate in training;
- preachers who do not want to be “hands on” with Bible Study;

- members who do not want their class moved;
- members who think that evangelism is the job of the staff;
- members who do not want their class “split”; and
- teachers who will not agree to a list of standards.

There is often universal resistance to the very practices that are common in churches with growing Sunday schools.

One list of “WHY SOME SUNDAY SCHOOLS DO NOT GROW” makes the following suggestions:

- A total lack of intention.
- A lack of leadership.
- An absence of skills.
- Poorly equipped leaders and teachers.
- An assumption that Sunday School is outdated or irrelevant.

Another list contained “MYTHS ABOUT SUNDAY SCHOOL GROWTH”:

- We would grow if we had a better curriculum.
- We would grow if we had more staff.
- We would grow if we were more innovative.
- We would grow if we were located elsewhere.
- We would grow if we had more resources.

It is not difficult to come up with a list of “what’s wrong.” What is difficult is having the courage and the determination to do something about it. What we are engaged in this quarter is not a complete solution, but it is a foundational and essential step if we are to move in the right direction. It is not right (stated positively, it is wrong) to insist upon Bible Study attendance

and pressure folks to attend if those of us who teach are not doing all that we can to make each class something special. Keep in mind that every week a teacher is occupying a substantial amount of time. For instance, 30 persons in a class of 45 minutes equals 22.5 person hours of time. How can one who loves the God of Heaven, who loves His Holy Word, and who loves those in the class do no more than reading a few pages in a “little book” and claim to be prepared to teach? I picked up one of the “little books” used here. It had the requisite 13 lessons. Obviously the author did not take into account that, like us, a congregation may lose at least one class per quarter where continuity and full coverage are not considered as important as a guest speaker. (That may well be true when the “little book – one quarter per class” rules the day. Of course, if more time were given to study a book of the Bible it would not hurt to lose a Sunday.) It had 128 pages with 15 of them dedicated to matters other than the lessons. Divide the remaining 113 pages by 13 and each lesson averages roughly 8.7 pages per class. If all pages are crammed into 12 classes it averages roughly 9.4 pages. Preparation? Doing the best we can? Striving to build up the faith and contribute to the spiritual growth of the class? Providing something other than pabulum? Hardly.

Hopefully and prayerfully, this class will help us take a step forward.