

THE ENCOURAGER

Help for Sunday School Teachers— Dedicated to those who take the Word of Life to Children Everywhere

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HOW TO BUILD A LEARNING UNIT

EXCELLENT BASIC BUILDING MATERIALS — by Shad David Sluiter, Hermosillo, MX

Part 1

A learning unit (or teaching unit) is a series of related lessons or Sunday School activities that a teacher plans to use over several classes.

This may mean that a teacher creates a variety of activities centered on:

- A Bible Character,
- A Series of Related Stories, or
- A Biblical Theme.



CHOOSING THE THEME FOR A LEARNING UNIT

Sunday School teachers in many assemblies of believers are often given complete responsibility to select and teach whatever Biblical topic they like. Such freedom is a both a blessing and a burden. It's a blessing in that there is no official religious creed to follow. You simply need to teach the whole Word of God. However, it is a difficult task to select something that is interesting, relevant to the students and covers basic Bible doctrines.

You may wish to review the 254 page Sunday School Book of Lessons (<http://gospelhall.org/downloads/gary-sharps-sunday-school-lessons-book.html>) which gives a brief outline of important points related to nearly all the stories from the Bible. For some teachers, this will be enough material for five years of lesson planning! Teachers who use this lesson guide will consecutively teach most of the Bible's contents.

CREATING YOUR OWN LEARNING UNITS

If you are going to create your own learning units, you should choose a theme that is broad enough to give variety to each lesson, but not so broad that you miss your first priority as a Bible Teacher. That is, students should gain a better understanding of God, the scriptures and salvation. Here are some examples of learning units that we will examine in further detail later on.



Such Freedom is BOTH a Blessing and a Burden!



EXAMPLES OF LEARNING UNIT THEMES

Missionaries of the Bible	Parables of Jesus –	Jerusalem, the key city of the Bible	Heaven –
Jonah, Stephen, Paul, Peter, Two Witnesses, 70 disciples, the Great Commission	Sower, Fisher, Lost Son, Vineyard Tenants, Two Builders etc.	– In Abraham's Day, David's Kingdom, the Temple, Calvary - the cross outside the city wall, Historical Battles, Jerusalem in Prophecy	Its requirements, features, inhabitants, location, duration, construction etc.

Continue to page 2 to read the Benefits of Planning a Learning Unit or jump to page 3 of the April ENCOURAGER of the article if you want to see more examples of themes right away

Maybe there's some advice here for SS Teachers too!

One of the best newspaper cartoons is Calvin and Hobbes. One day Calvin and Hobbes come marching into the living room early one morning. His mother is seated there in her favorite chair sipping her morning coffee. She looks up at young Calvin. She is amused and amazed at how he is dressed. Calvin's head is encased in a large space helmet. A cape is draped around his neck, across his shoulders, down his back and is dragging on the floor. One hand is holding a flashlight and the other a baseball bat. "What's up today?" asks his mom. "Nothing, so far," answers Calvin. "So far?" she questions. "Well, you never know," Calvin says, "Something could happen today." Then Calvin marches off, "And if anything does, I'm going to be ready for it!" Calvin's mom looks out at the reading audience and she says, "I need a suit like that!"

How to Teach a Learning Unit to Your Sunday School Class

Planning a learning unit takes work and forethought, but it is well worth the effort. A teacher may want to include learning units in his/her strategy for the following reasons.

PLANNING AHEAD IS ACTUALLY EASIER THAN NOT PLANNING

The teacher who uses units of learning to plan several weeks or months of lessons knows in advance what he/she needs to prepare for each week. Without a long-term plan, a teacher sometimes spends more time on Saturday night brainstorming for an appropriate topic instead of actually preparing the lesson itself. A pre-planned course of action saves the teacher the frustration of deciding what comes next.

TOPICS ARE VARIED AND COMPREHENSIVE

The teacher who creates a learning unit will teach a wider variety of subjects than a teacher who selects topics at random. He/she doesn't fall into the trap of repeating a small number of favorite themes many times. While in the process of making a chart of 10 weeks of lesson plans, the teacher may notice that he/she has selected "Salvation is Free" as a theme for 6 of the 10 weeks. Although, it is true that salvation *is* free and should be emphasized, the teacher may wish to cover other topics. So the planning chart (see planning chart below) helps identify redundancies or gaps over the course of a semester. Planning a learning unit is one good way to ensure that students are getting a wide scope of Biblical knowledge.

LEARNING IS REINFORCED THROUGH REVIEW

The teacher who is teaching a unit is more likely to review previous week's material without encountering blank stares from his students. While referring to the theme's timeline, map, chart or bulletin board, the teacher can easily show a logical or chronological sequence as the lessons progress. Students should anticipate what they will be learning in the coming weeks as well as remember what they covered in previous sessions.

COOPERATION IS DEVELOPED BETWEEN TEACHERS

Teachers who work alone miss out on learning new ideas from their peers. Creativity sometimes runs dry after weeks or months of teaching. In spite of this burn-out phenomenon, teachers without plans may find it too difficult to share a class. By creating a learning unit, two or more teachers may easily share the load of teaching and still maintain a consistent theme or approach.

Check out Page 3 for more!

**PLANNING
AHEAD
IS
ACTUALLY
EASIER
THAN
NOT
PLANNING!**

**And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness
of the firmament; and they that
turn many to righteousness as the
stars for ever and ever. Daniel**



12:3



SUNDAY SCHOOL PLANNING – BUILDING A BIBLE LEARNING UNIT

Part 3

HOW TO BUILD A LEARNING UNIT TO YOUR SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASS

THE ELEMENTS OF A BUILDING A BIBLE LEARNING UNIT

Fortunately, the process of creating a learning unit is common sense: choose a biblical theme, identify its components, and select verses and activities that relate to the theme. Your task list in creating a learning unit includes:

BASIC ELEMENTS OF A BIBLE LEARNING UNIT Part 1


1. CREATE A LESSON CHART

The most basic element of a learning unit is a one-page plan. Select a theme, such as “God is...” and then brainstorm as many aspects of the theme as you and your colleagues can think of. Eliminate or combine duplicate ideas.

In the example below, two teachers brainstormed about the theme “God is” and wrote the following list of ideas. After examining the list, they decided that some ideas are similar enough to combine into a single lesson. For example, “forever” and “eternal” are nearly synonyms. God’s everlasting existence and unchanging character could be taught in the same lesson.

Theme – God is...	
First Draft - Brainstorm	Second Draft – Remove duplicates
God is mercy God is love God is powerful God is eternal God is forever God is kind God is a savior God is sovereign Etc.	God is mercy God is love God is powerful God is eternal exclude God is forever (similar to God is eternal) exclude God is kind (similar to God is mercy) God is a savior exclude God is sovereign (similar to God is powerful)

Other theme suggestions and helps CONTINUED on pages 1-2-3 of the April ENCOURAGER. ENCOURAGER — March 2008 — Page 4



*He that
wins souls
is wise!*

