

Teaching Plan for Students

Great Expectations: Planting Seeds for Sunday School Growth



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Purpose: To provide a two-hour teaching experience for student Sunday School leaders and members for the purpose of identifying specific ways to strengthen their Sunday School class and to expect Sunday School growth and expansion.

How to use this plan

- For the local church: 1) Use to train student Sunday School leaders and members during a local church training or kick-off event. 2) Use one or two steps from the plan during weekly or monthly workers' meetings over an extended period of time.
- For regional and state training: Use to train student Sunday School leaders and members in state or associational training events.

Preparation

Provide the following resources for use throughout the training:

- Nametag for each participant. (A nametag template is provided on the CD-Rom in the Great Expectations Sunday School Launch Kit.)
- Markers
- Tape
- Large sheets of paper
- Index cards
- Alarm clocks
- Several large balloons (at least 9" size)
- Package of smaller balloons (5" size) in seven different colors; use at least 14 balloons (2 of each color)
- Strips of construction paper to match the colors of the balloons (prepare an equal number of each color strip for anticipated attendance)
- Pumpkin Seeds (total of three seeds per conferee expected)
- Poster 1: Write on a large sheet of paper: Expect Sunday School to be a 24/7/365 network of care, prayer, communication, outreach, and ministry.

- Poster 2: Write on a large sheet of paper: Open enrollment means people can belong before they believe.
- Poster 3: Write on a large sheet of paper: Start New Units.
- Handout 1: Strengths and Weaknesses
- Handout 2: Seed Verses
- Handout 3: Impressions Matter
- Handout 4: Bookmarks
- Optional items: several small potted plants to place around the room or on a focal table.



Download the following materials:

- Provide one copy of *Great Expectations: Planting Seeds for Sunday School Growth* by David Francis for each participant. The book is available three ways: 1) Print copies from the file provided on this CD-Rom. 2) Download the file from www.LifeWay.com/SundaySchool and make copies. 3) Order copies for \$1 each at www.LifeWay.com/SundaySchool.
- PowerPoint presentation: Great Expectations: Planting Seeds for Sunday School Growth—Student.

Prepare a display of the following resources:

- *Great Expectations: Planting Seeds for Sunday School Growth* by David Francis
- Sample of LifeWay Student Sunday School resources—LifeFocus: including Leader Packs, Leader Guides, and Learner Guides, KNOWN: Leader Guide and Student Book (including copies of the free online resources from www.lifeway.com/known under the Leader tab); FUEL, FUEL2, and FUEL Ignited; and essential connection and Living with Teenagers

Prepare the room for learning that helps students connect:

- Arrange chairs in a semi-circle facing a focal wall. Take extra care in the first impression you present to conferees.
- Place nametags and markers near chairs for participants to prepare their own nametag.
- Arrange AV equipment for PowerPoint presentation (screen, extension cord with multiple plug outlets)
- Provide CD player and selected disc for background music (OPTIONAL).
- Create a Conference Expectations poster and attach to a focal wall.
- Cut apart the verses on Handout 2: Seed Verses, roll them, insert them into the 5" balloons, inflate, and scatter on the floor. Blow up at least one additional balloon of each color and scatter them on the floor as well. The more balloons the better.
- Reproduce Handout 4: Bookmarks on colored card stock and cut apart.
- On the pumpkin seeds, using a fine point permanent marker, write 1 Pet. 1:3 on each seed. For added durability, consider brushing clear nail polish on the seed after the ink dries.

Procedures:

1. INTRODUCTION TO EXPECTATIONS (15 min.)

As conferees enter, direct them to complete a nametag with the following information: name and their favorite holiday. [SLIDE 2]

Display one or more alarm clocks (wind-up alarm clock, digital alarm clock, or your cell phone). Make a big deal about picking up and setting alarms to ring at different times within the class time. Place the alarm clocks on a table in the front of the room. Ask: *What do you expect will happen with the alarms I have set to ring during our class time?*

Post a list of what you expect from conferees during this conference, each with an emphasis on the word **expect**. Create your own list or use something like this:

Expectations for the Conference

1. I expect you to participate in assignments and discussions.
2. I expect you to have an open mind and teachable spirit.
3. I expect you to depend upon God's Holy Spirit to guide you.
4. I expect you share your ideas with the rest of the group.
5. I expect you to raise your hand when you need to go to the restroom. (OK, you may want to leave off the last one.)

Direct conferees to find someone who listed the same favorite holiday on their nametag. Form groups of no more than three if possible. Encourage conferees without a matching person to form a group of their own. Instruct groups to discuss this question: *What do you most anticipate about your favorite holiday? What do you expect?*

Call for conferees to share some of the interesting things that the others anticipate about their favorite holidays. As conferees share, pull out a 9" balloon and begin to blow it up. After every few blows of air, ask conferees what they expect from what you are doing. Continue sharing about holidays and inflating the balloon. As the balloon continues to get larger, continue to ask what conferees expect to happen. Inflate the balloon until it bursts. Ask: *Did you expect that? Why or why not?*

Direct attention to 1 Peter 1:3 (NLT) that you have written on the board: All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation. [SLIDE 3]

Ask: *According to Peter, what is the great expectation with which we are to live? Say: There are a lot of places and a lot of things in our daily lives in which we have expectations. For many of us, however, Sunday School may be one of those places where we (neither us nor our students) do not have great expectations. Today we will discover how this great expectation with which we are to live our lives can also be a driving force as we expect God to do great things through Sunday School.*

2. GREAT EXPECTATIONS (15 min.)

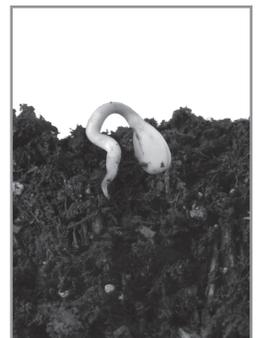
Post these definitions on a focal wall: [Slide 4]

- Expectation: the act or state of expecting; anticipation; something expected
- Expect: to look forward; to anticipate or look forward to the coming or occurrence of; to consider probable or certain (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/expectations>) (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/expect>)

Ask: *What are some things you expect in general? What do you expect to happen each day? (alarm clock to go off; that there will be hot water in the shower; that the car will start)*

Lead conferees in a discussion of the following:

1. *When you come to church, what do you expect?*
2. *When you come to Bible study, what do you expect?*
3. *Do you expect students to be excited about Bible study and to bring unsaved friends with them?*
4. *Do you expect students to engage in a meaningful Bible study experience?*



5. Do you expect students to say yes to opportunities for service?
6. Do you expect your students to help start new classes?
7. What do your students expect when they come to church and Bible study?



Call for a volunteer to read aloud the first paragraph on page 4 of *Great Expectations*. [Slide 5]

Ask: *What does this story have to do with student Sunday School? What difference might it make if we were to expect God to do things each time we met together? What would lead us to say, "No, of course we don't expect things to happen every week"?*

Discuss: *What are some common names for Sunday School? What do you call the Sunday School hour at your church?*

Display POSTER 1 on a focal wall. Lead conferees to discuss their reaction to the statement. Ask: *Why would Sunday School be considered at 24/7/365 ministry? Do you believe that? What impact should this have on your Sunday School ministry?*

Point out the Three Great Expectations for Sunday School in *Great Expectations* (page 12). [Slide 6]

Poll conferees: *On a scale of 1 (no expectations) to 10 (great expectations,) how would you rate your Sunday School for each of these Three Great Expectations? Where would you like your class to be three months from now? Where would you like your class to be this time next year?*

Distribute index cards and instruct conferees to write a note or two about what they would like to expect in the future for their Sunday School class.

3. TEAM COMPARISONS (10 min.)

Divide conferees into three teams and distribute the team assignments on **HANDOUT 1: Strengths and Weaknesses**. Provide large sheets of paper and markers. Draw the group continuum in *Great Expectations* (page 9) on the board. [Slide 7]

Team 1: Using the information in *Great Expectations* (pages 7-10), be prepared to define Small Groups and to identify and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Small Groups.

Team 2: Using the information in *Great Expectations* (pages 7-10), be prepared to define Sunday School and to identify and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Sunday School.

Team 3: Using the information in *Great Expectations* (pages 7-10), be prepared to define Discipleship Groups and to identify and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Discipleship Groups.

Allow teams five minutes to complete their assignments. After teams have shared their reports, review the benefits of open groups and closed groups. (For more information about the benefits, review the information from *Connect3*, available free at www.LifeWay.com/SundaySchool, as well as the information in *Great Expectations*.)

4. PLANTING SEEDS (10 min.)

Direct attention to the balloons containing the slips of paper from HANDOUT 2: Seed Verses that you have scattered around the floor. Distribute strips of colored construction paper (seven colors of paper to match the seven colors of balloons), one slip of paper to each conferee. (Note: There are seven seed verses; if you have more than seven conferees, form teams using the seven colors. If you have fewer than seven conferees, some conferees can read multiple verses.)

Explain that on your signal, conferees will find the balloon(s) that matches their colored slip of paper, and then pop the balloons to find their slip of paper with the Scripture verse.

Before you signal conferees to begin, ask: *What do you expect to experience for the next minute?* (the sound of balloons popping)

After they find their Seed Verses, conferees will read their verses and determine how their verses can apply to having great expectations for Sunday School. [SLIDE 8]

5. EXPECT NEW PEOPLE (10 min.)

Write this quote from *Great Expectations* on the board (page 13): An open group expects new people every week. [SLIDE 9]

Lead conferees to discuss what they do to be prepared for, and to expect, new people in class each week. Ask: *If we don't do anything to prepare for new people each week, what happens if and when they show up?*

Call for a conferee to read aloud the "No Throwaway Sundays" paragraph in *Great Expectations* (page 14). Discuss reactions to the sentence, "Every week may be somebody's first week." Discuss the importance of expecting and preparing for new people each week. [SLIDE 10]

Using the information in *Great Expectations* (pages 14-15), discuss the four aspects of invitation identified on page 15: The Culture of Invitation, The Psychology of Invitation, The Theology of Invitation, and The Sociology of Invitation. Briefly identify each aspect and lead conferees to discuss each aspect. For each aspect, ask: *What difference would this aspect make in seeing new people in your ministry?* [Slide 11]

6. IMPRESSIONS MATTER (15 min.)

Divide conferees into four teams and distribute the team assignments on HANDOUT 3: Impressions Matter. [Slide 12]

Team 1: Using the information from "Welcome Desk" in *Great Expectations*(page 20), discuss the principles in this paragraph and how these principles could be used in Sunday School ministry to students.

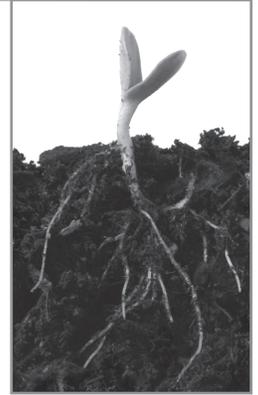
Team 2: Using the information from "Signs, Signs, Everywhere a Sign" in *Great Expectations* (pages 20-21), discuss the principles in this paragraph and how these principles could be used in Sunday School ministry to students.

Team 3: Using the information from "The Importance of the Door" in *Great Expectations* (page 21), discuss the principles in this paragraph and how these principles could be used in Sunday School ministry to students.

Team 4: Using the information from "Clearing the Clutter" in *Great Expectations* (page 22), discuss the principles in this paragraph and how these principles could be used in Sunday School ministry to students.



Allow teams five minutes to complete their assignments before calling for team reports. Discuss the ideas that each team shares. Ask: *What were your first impressions when you arrived today? Why are first impressions important for students?*



7. EXPECT PEOPLE TO RESPOND (15 min.)

Post POSTER 2 on a focal wall. Say: *When a guest visits your class, it is not unreasonable to invite him or her to join your class.* [SLIDE 13]

Approach several conferees and ask things such as: *Would you please prepare to read the Scripture for this section? Would you please get a bottle of water for me? Would you please move your chair to that spot over there?* (Add other items for which you would expect conferees to respond with "yes.") Summarize the different things for which we should expect people to say "yes" as described in *Great Expectations* (pages 24-28).

Discuss the role of Care Group Leaders using the information in *Great Expectations* (page 28). Share some ideas of how conferees could involve students as Care Group Leaders and how that role of responsibility could benefit the Sunday School class. (For additional information related to Care Group Leaders, review the information on pages 25-27 of *Connect3*, available free at www.LifeWay.com/SundaySchool.)

Lead conferees to discuss the following questions:

1. *Why should we expect people to respond?*
2. *What do we communicate if we don't expect people to say yes?*
3. *Why should we, as leaders, say yes to new methods and training?*
4. *Why should people respond? Why should we respond?*

8. EXPECT GROWTH (20 min.)

Say: *One of the greatest joys as a young couple is saying (or hearing from your married friends or married children) "We're expecting!"* Ask: *What types of things go through your mind when you say/hear those words? What types of thoughts do you have when you hear a Sunday School class say that?* [SLIDE 14]

Attach POSTER 3 to a focal wall. Discuss what it means to start new units in student Sunday School. [SLIDE 15]

Divide conferees into two teams for a forced debate. Assign Team 1 to argue why creating new units is not a good idea; assign Team 2 to argue why creating new units is a good idea. Allow teams five minutes to prepare their arguments using information from *Great Expectations* (pages 40-41). After five minutes, call for teams to share their arguments (2 minutes each) and then give each team one minute for rebuttal.

Using information from *Great Expectations* (pages 41-43), discuss the concept of apprentice teachers. Allow volunteers to share any experiences they have had with apprentice teachers. Take time to remind conferees of the importance, especially from a legal standpoint, of having more than one teacher in each student Sunday School class. Challenge conferees, if they are not already doing so, to consider adopting an apprentice teacher approach to their Sunday School classes. Ask: *How could an apprentice teacher based approach to Sunday School stimulate the development of new classes?*

To help conferees begin to think about how to start new units, write this progression on the board, one step at a time. At each step, lead conferees to suggest what would be a natural new unit class. [SLIDE 16]

For example (but not the only solution):

- One class of students 7-12 graders
- One class of 7-8 graders and one class of 9-12 graders
- One class of 7-8 graders, one class of 9-10 graders, and one class of 11-12 graders
- One class for each grade and/or gender within each grade (as growth continues, multiple single grade classes may be necessary)

9. EXPECT GREAT THINGS (10 min.)

Write on a large sheet of paper: My Expectations. Provide markers and direct conferees to write on the paper what they are expecting, in faith, to happen in Sunday School as a result of this conference. As conferees write responses, play the 4Him song (or YouTube video) "Where There is Faith" or use the Addison Road song (or video) "This Could Be Our Day." Review the responses.

Distribute three printed pumpkin seeds (printed with the 1 Pet. 1:3 reference) to each conferee. Explain that the seed is a visual reminder to expect growth and fruit in our Sunday School ministry. Explain that one seed is for the conferee to keep as a reminder to have great expectations. Instruct them give one seed to another adult leader who was not a part of this training (along with a copy of *Great Expectations*) and then explain the meaning of the seed. Challenge conferees to place the third seed somewhere in their Sunday School class as a weekly reminder as well as a discussion starter. Challenge conferees to be prepared to explain the meaning of the seed when asked by students. (Optional idea: Challenge conferees to make seeds of their own to give to their students.)

Remind conferees of the notes they wrote in Step 2. Challenge conferees to work toward reaching those goals. Challenge conferees to expect great things from God and to attempt great things for God.

Distribute copies of HANDOUT 4: Bookmarks and instruct conferees to read aloud in unison the quotes and the Scripture verse printed on the bookmark. Challenge conferees to expect great things each week as they prepare to teach their class. [SLIDE 17]

Close in prayer, including 1 Peter 1:3 within the prayer.

