**Starting & Teaching**

**Special Interest**

**Bible Study Groups**

**In Your Church**



A Comprehensive Guide To Starting & Teaching Special Interest, Focused & Other Small Group Bible Studies In The Local Church

By Rodney L. Pry

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**The Need For Special Interest Bible Study Groups…**

When most people think about Christian education within the church, they think about Sunday school. I certainly believe in Sunday school and similar forms of Christian education. But, the fact is, Sunday school is not nearly as effective today as it once was. Over the past twenty years, Sunday school attendance has declined over twenty-five percent and today, Sunday school represents less than half of all Christian education that takes place through the local church.

We must also be aware that only about twenty-five percent or fewer of the members of the average church attend Sunday school. And, even worse, only about thirty-five percent of the people in most communities attend church on even an occasional basis. All things considered, we can see that there are many, many people – children, youth and adults – within our communities who are not involved in any form of Christian education, people who are not learning anything about Jesus Christ, the Bible or God’s love and will for their lives.

True, Sunday school is not the only form of Christian education offered in most churches. People are also involved in Bible study programs like midweek Bible studies, home Bible study groups, youth groups, kids’ clubs and VBS. But, even so, there are many people in every community who are not learning anything about Jesus Christ and the Bible.

I believe that this is especially troubling when you look at the children and youth of our nation. There are so many things they see in the world around them that would tempt them and draw them away from what is right and good. Things like drugs, alcohol, money, selfishness, power, popularity and many, many others have become “gods” for many kids and for their parents, too.

Sadly, many children and youth today are not being exposed to any form of religious or moral training. They’re certainly not hearing anything related to these areas in the public schools and most are not getting such instruction even in the home. If they are to hear anything about Jesus Christ and His great love for them, it must come from the church.

Again, I believe that Sunday school is one of the best and most effective ways of teaching people – especially children and youth – about Jesus Christ, His teachings about right and wrong, His example of how to live each day, and the way of salvation that is available through Him. But, if only a small percentage of our children and youth are attending Sunday school, what do we do about all of the other kids of our community? Should we just give up on them and write them off? I don’t think so!

I believe that churches and individual Christians have a great responsibility to try to reach and teach all persons of all ages. Matthew 28:19 & 20 (the Great Commission) says that we are to “Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” This wasn’t just instruction for the early Church. It isn’t just instruction for preachers or church leaders. It is the commission for every Christian. It is YOUR commission!

Jesus Christ expects each of us to do all that we can to reach out to the children, youth and adults of our community. We are to witness to them through our day-to-day contacts and conversations. We are to share God’s Word with them. We are to invite them to attend Sunday school and the other Christian education programs of our church. And we are to work to make our Sunday schools and other Bible study programs the very best and most effective that they can be.

But, if people don’t come to Sunday school and if they see it and the other Christian education programs of the church as boring and irrelevant, what can we do? Well, one thing that we might do is to think of additional methods and programs that can be used to involve the children, youth and adults of our community in some form of Bible study.

Again, I’m not talking about replacing Sunday school or any of the other Bible study programs that you now have. I’m talking about supplementing these programs with new and different Bible study programs. Specifically, I would like to suggest that you and your church consider starting one or more special interest Bible study groups.

**What Is a Special Interest Bible Study?**

The first question that most people will ask is, “What is a ‘special interest Bible study?’” Simply stated, a special interest Bible study is one that combines Bible study with an activity that is of general interest to the members of the group. For example, a group of kids who enjoy building and flying kites might meet one afternoon each week after school. For the first half hour they would work together as teams to build kites and for the remainder of the hour they would have a time of Bible study, perhaps based on what the Bible says about teamwork, cooperation and getting along with others. Following the formal meeting, the group would go outside to a field near the church to fly their kites.

The list of activities on which the special interest Bible study could be based is almost endless. For children and youth, these activities could relate to similar interests in hobbies, crafts, music, science, nature, sports, pets and many more. For adults, the list of activities could include aerobics, cooking, dieting, book discussion, crafts, drama, parenting and more. The idea is to use the general interest of the members of the group as a “drawing card” to get persons interested in the group and then to use the Bible study to help each person see the relevance of the Bible to all areas of life, even related to that area of the special interest activity.

As much as possible, the Bible studies used with special interest group studies are related or focused on the group activities or to a special need or interest that the members express or exhibit. For example, a Bible study for kids interested in sports might be based on Christian athletes. The Bible study for a dieting, exercise or cooking class might be based on what the Bible says about healthy living. Or a parenting class might be tied directly to helping participants learn what the scriptures say about a Christian home and family.

**Types of Focused Bible Study Groups…**

There are literally hundreds of possible activities on which a special interest Bible study could be based. As long as there is sufficient interest in the topic or activity by a group within your church or community, it could possibly be the basis for a special interest Bible study.

General types of special interest studies might include health and fitness, self-improvement, hobbies, crafts, discussion groups, boys’ clubs, girls’ clubs, how-to music, intergenerational activities, service projects and others.

Following is a list of activities that might be used with a special interest Bible study. As you read through this list, I hope that you will think about the interests that you see in persons of different ages within your church and community and how you might use some of these ideas to start one or more focused Bible study groups within your church.

Following some of the activities I have listed comments and notes related to that activity, if I feel that additional explanation is necessary. In most cases, I have not specifically listed the activities as being for children, youth or adults. If there is interest in the activity, it can probably be geared for just about any group of interested individuals, no matter what their age.

**Possible Focused Group Activities…**

* Gourmet Cooking
* Healthy Cooking (Thesecould be classes related to specific health problems like diabetes and high blood pressure or they could be general classes on how to cook with less fat or to reduce calories.)
* Dieting Group Classes
* Basics of Cooking
* Healthy Living (Don’t just think in terms of adults or senior citizens here. Children need to learn about healthy living and eating, too.)
* Aerobics
* Age-Specific Exercise (Groups like small children, senior citizens and others need exercise programs tailored to their special ages, needs and abilities.)
* Computer Skills (These could be classes to teach older adults the basic computer skills or they could be more advanced classes directed at the interests of children, youth or other adults.)
* How to use E-mail and the Internet
* Parenting Skills (These classes could be of a general nature or they could be specific to the interests of parents of small children, teenagers, etc.)
* Preparation For Childbirth Classes
* New Dads’ Class
* New Moms’ Class
* Babysitter Training
* Support Group Programs
* General Crafts (This is a group for anyone who is “crafty.” Each week a different member of the group might share their craft with the group or you might bring in persons from outside the group to introduce members to even more crafts.)
* Toddler’s Gym (These are a combination of exercise and fun time activities for mothers and/or dads and their toddlers.)
* Nature Studies (These could focus on a wide range of nature related activities including bird watching, learning about plants and animals, conservation and many others.)
* Music Appreciation (Music appreciation classes usually involve listening to different types of music and helping the students appreciate the message of both the words and music and how the song was created.)
* Church Choirs
* Bell Choirs (Remember, you don’t have to invest megabucks in bells for a bell choir. There are even simple “plastic” bells that are great for use by a children’s bell choir.)
* Church Orchestra or Band (I’ve seen “church orchestras” with as few as four or five members. You don’t have to have a large group, just people who are interested.
* Pets and Pet Care
* Journalism (This group could learn about various forms of journalism, including newspaper, radio and TV. You might have guests from your local newspaper or radio station talk to the group. You might also plan a tour of a local TV station or other media. The group could also get ideas and instruction related to writing, speaking, etc.)
* General Hobbies (This usually involves different members sharing their hobbies with the group. You can also bring in outside people to talk about their hobbies.)
* Community Work Teams ((These groups gather to plan their additional activities and work projects for older adults, the sick and shut-ins, and others in the community. These groups might also become involved in community betterment projects like picking up litter or working to fix up a local community park.)
* Fundraising Groups (The purpose of these groups, as the name implies, is to hold a number of fundraising projects throughout the year. The group gathers to plan their projects and what they will do with the money raised. Usually the money goes to missions or local service groups.)
* Church Work Teams (These groups might meet for a specific purpose each week, like folding the weekly church bulletins, or they might plan and carry out special church clean up or fix up projects.)
* Drama Groups (These groups could plan for one or more big projects each year, like the presentation of an annual musical or they could prepare a number of short skits that could be presented in their local church or at other churches in the area.)
* Puppet Teams (Puppet groups can involve a lot of different people with different interests. To have a successful puppet team, you will need puppeteers, people to make the puppets, people to create the scenery and puppet stage, lighting and stage technicians and others. Puppets can be purchased or they can be made. Your team could present puppet plays to the children and others within your church or for neighboring churches and groups.)
* Book Discussion Group
* Movie Discussion Group
* Music Discussion Group (For all types of music: traditional hymns, contemporary Christian music, country, rock & roll, etc.)
* TV Discussion Group
* Magic
* Sports Groups (There could be a wide range of activities related to sports. They could be groups that gather each week to play sports, like softball or touch football, they could be groups that gather to have discussion about sports, they could watch sports videos or they could plan special activities like taking a trip to a professional baseball game.)
* Fun and Games (They name pretty much says it all. These groups are based on a variety of fun activities and games. The games could range from family type board games and card games or more active games.)
* Adventure Club (I think these can be the basis for some of the best and most interesting focused groups. Each meeting of the group usually focuses on one specific country. The meeting then combines a variety of information about that country, including samples of their ethnic foods, clothing, history, etc. This information might be presented by group members or teams or you might invite persons from your community who have heritage based in the countries you are studying.)
* Gardening
* Antiques
* Weather
* Travel (These groups often study about possible travel destinations, locally, statewide, nationally or around the world. Such groups often will plan one or more special trips as a group during the year.)
* History
* Religions of the World
* Bible History
* People, Places and Things of the Bible
* Missions Around the World
* Small Engine Repair
* Basic Car Care (This can be of special interest to women, youth and others who aren’t very familiar with their car and how to do basic maintenance and care.)
* Astronomy
* Electronics
* First Aid
* Video Production
* Photography
* Quilting
* Sports Instruction
* Sports Heroes & Christian Athletes
* Sports Trivia
* Board Games
* Cooking For Kids
* Fun Eith Food
* Computer Games
* Helping Others
* Making Gifts For Others
* Trading Cards
* Paper Airplanes
* Remote Controlled Cars, Drones, Etc.
* Legos
* Geology
* Chess
* Hunting Safety
* Make-Up & Nails For Girls
* Creative Writing
* Storytelling
* Dance
* Basic Electronics
* Singing & Choir
* Holiday Fun & Games
* Cookie Club
* Hot Wheels Car Racing
* Basic Sewing
* Home Safety
* Mystery Club (something new and different each week)
* Heroes of the Bible
* Archery
* Make It With Duct Tape
* Christmas And Holiday Crafts
* Calligraphy
* Learn About Animals
* Learn About Insects
* Learn About Birds
* Jewelry Making
* Needlework
* Stained Glass
* Creative Crafts from ‘Junk’
* Painting/Drawing
* Wood Crafts
* Screen Printing
* Pottery
* Ceramics
* General Arts
* Church Newsletter Club (Many churches have individuals who would be interested in helping with the various jobs involved in writing, editing, printing and assembling a monthly church newsletter. This group brings these individuals together to plan and produce such a publication.)
* Hunting (These groups usually get together to talk about hunting and to hear special guests talk and show slides of their trips and adventures.)
* Fishing
* Fly Tying
* Model Car Racing (Many fathers and sons are familiar with the Cub Scouts’ “Pinewood Racing Derby.” These are small model cars that race down an incline of an indoor track to see which car is the fastest. This group – parents and children or just children or youth – could be involved in a similar type of racing. Model cars could be built according to agreed upon specifications and then raced. Small radio-controlled cars could also be raced against similar cars or timed through an obstacle course.)
* Coin Collecting
* Stamp Collecting
* General Collectibles (As the name implies, this group could involve anyone of any age who collects just about anything. Each week a different group member could share their hobby and you could also bring in collectors from outside the group to share.)
* NASCAR Collectibles
* Avon Collectibles
* Kite Making and Flying
* Model Rocketry
* Sports Card Collecting
* Postcard Collecting

**Before You Get Started…**

In the preceding section I listed a large variety of ideas for activities that could possibly be used as the basis for a special interest Bible study. But, is selecting the activity your only real concern as you think about starting a special interest Bible study group? Not really!

There are four basic elements that must be a part of any special interest Bible study. These four elements are…

* The activity
* The leaders
* The Bible study, and
* The group members or participants.

As you begin to think about starting a special interest Bible study, it is important to remember that each of these four elements is important and necessary. If you are to have a successful group, each element must be well planned and in place before the group can begin.

Let’s take a look at why each of these parts is important:

**The Activity.** I have heard some Christians say that it should not be necessary to get people to a Bible study by combining it with an activity that is of more interest to the participants than the Bible study itself. Ideally this is true. But the truth is that many people today don’t see the need for Bible study in their lives. First, you have those people who would say that they not only have no interest in Bible study but also have no interest in religion, Jesus Christ, God’s Word or the church. Then you also have people who attend worship and think that this is enough. They consider themselves “good enough” and are happy just getting by as a Christian. They don’t realize how much more there is to living fully in Christ and how much they are missing.

Because there are people who are either not interested in Bible study or who don’t see Christian education as a priority, does that mean that we, as churches and as individual Christians, should stop trying to reach out to them and stop trying to teach them more about God, His Word and His will for their lives? No!

Since it is important to try to get all persons of all ages involved in some sort of Bible study and Christian education, I don’t see anything wrong with combining that Bible study with other activities – activities that the participants might initially even see as a higher priority than the Bible study. (Hopefully, that attitude will change once the persons become involved in the Bible study and in learning more about the Bible, Jesus Christ and in striving to live each day for Him.)

So, if we are going to use the activity as a “draw” or a “hook” to get people interested in being a part of the group, it had better be an activity that is, indeed, of real interest and one that has a genuine appeal for the people that you want to teach.

There are several other things to keep in mind about the activity that you use. First, you need to consider the costs that will be involved. Will you need to pay a leader to teach the group? If you are bringing in an outside leader, someone like a professional exercise trainer or a nutritionist, they might expect to be paid. Will there be other expenses involved, such as for materials that would be used in a craft class? The whole area of possible expenses must be addressed right from the start and decisions must be made as to how these expenses will be covered. Expenses might be covered by charging a membership fee or perhaps your church or individuals would agree to underwrite the costs involved.

Another thing that you need to consider is the time that will be required for the activity. In most cases you will not want the total class to run longer than one hour for children and youth and possibly up to one and one-half hours for older youth and adults. And remember, you want the Bible study to have a significant part of the time; the group is not just about the activity; the Bible study should be given no less than one-third of the total class time and, in most cases, should be given fully half of the time. The consideration then becomes, will you really be able to do what you want with the activity in 30 to 45 minutes?

**The Leaders.** First, please note the word I used here – leaders! Just about every group should have at least two persons who will serve as leaders – usually one person to lead the activity and another person to lead the Bible study. Sometimes you might find persons who would be able to switch off weekly duties or you might want to get more than one person involved in leading either the activity or the Bible study or both. It is also necessary to have two unrelated adults in the room at all times for safety and liability concerns if they are teaching children or youth.

When you start looking for leaders for your group, there are several very important things that you need to keep in mind. First, each leader needs to have a good working knowledge of the subject that you are expecting them to teach, whether it is the activity or the Bible study. Second, they need to be a good teacher. There are many people who have great knowledge of a subject, but who do not have the skills or the ability to relate that information to others. And third, each leader needs to be good with people, particularly persons of the age group that will be involved in the group. This is especially important if you are asking the leader to teach children or youth. Persons who are knowledgeable in a certain area and may even be able to explain it or teach it to adults may have problems putting their teaching into words and methods that would be understandable, interesting and relevant to younger students.

There are several other very important qualities that every teacher or leader in a special interest Bible study or any other Christian education setting should have. First, every teacher or leader should be a dedicated Christian who loves Jesus Christ as their own personal Lord and Savior. Second, they should live a good, exemplary Christian life. And third, they should have genuine Christian love and concern for the students that they will be asked to teach.

Sometimes church leaders get so caught up in just trying to fill teaching positions in their Christian education programs that they fail to ask these most basic questions about the prospective teachers. The teachers and leaders for your focused Bible study group – whether they are leading the activity or the Bible study – need to see Jesus Christ as the real focus of the group and their life – both inside the classroom and in the everyday world. They should be a fitting example for everyone to follow and their love and concern for others should also serve as an example for all persons of all ages to follow.

It is also important that you select leaders for your group who are willing to give the time necessary to planning and conducting each of the meetings. One of the most disturbing statistics that I have read about Sunday school in many years says that the average Sunday school teacher spends only about 15 minutes preparing their weekly lesson. 15 minutes! I can’t even read my entire lesson in 15 minutes! If that’s all the commitment that the average teacher has to their job, is it any wonder that students find the lessons boring, uninteresting and irrelevant? If you are to have a successful special interest Bible study group, both the leader of the activity and the Bible study must be very well prepared for each meeting. They must be fully committed to the group and have agreed to make it a priority in their lives.

Because you are asking the leaders of your special interest Bible study to give the group priority and to make a real commitment to their work with it, many potential leaders will ask how long the group will be meeting or how long they are expected to serve as a leader. This is something that you need to decide as you make your plans. Many groups will meet only from September to May. Outdoor or sports groups might only meet for several weeks or several months during the warmer weather. Some groups for children and youth might only meet during the kids’ vacation from school during the summer months. Special interest groups and groups focused on specific educational areas, like preparation for childbirth classes or basic computer classes, might have a specific number of meetings announced before the start of the group. As you plan for your special interest group, be sure that decide how long your class will run and the exact commitment that you will expect from each of your leaders.

It is also very important to make sure that you have all of the leaders in place before you start promoting the group. Several years ago I heard about a church that decided to start a new Bible study class for young adults. They promoted the group within their church and community and at the first meeting they had 12 persons present. As the group sat there and started to talk about what they wanted to do, they decided that they would need a teacher or leader. They all looked at each other and one by one said things like, “I don’t want to do it!” or “Not me!” And guess what…the group never met again. Having your teachers and leaders in place before you even start to promote your group is an absolute necessity.

Finally, there is one other area related to teachers and leaders that you must, unfortunately, consider and that is the whole area of the safety of your students. Because of safety concerns that every church must today address, we need to run a police background check on all persons who either volunteer or who are asked to teach or help with the groups in our churches. These safety issues are particularly important when it comes to teachers and workers with children and youth but they are important no matter who they will be working with.

**The Group Members or Participants.** As I noted earlier, all persons of all ages need to be involved in some form of Christian education or Bible study, to learn about Jesus Christ, the Bible and God’s will for their lives. This means that, as a church, we should try to put together an overall Christian education plan that has the goal of getting every member of our church and others from our community involved in some form of Christian education – Sunday school, midweek Bible studies, home Bible study groups, youth group, kids’ club and special interest Bible study groups.

With the goal of getting every member involved in some form of Christian education, perhaps the place to start would be to look at the people who are not now involved in any other form of Bible study – the children, youth and adults who do not attend Sunday school or the other Christian education or Bible study programs of your church. Talk to these persons, talk to their parents or use a survey form to try to get some ideas about the common interests that some of these people share and how you might use these interests as the basis for a special interest study group.

As you talk with possible participants, remember that they might be interested in learning things, they might be interested in self-improvement, they might be interested in having fun or in a number of other general interest areas. And, as you consider the interests of the people that you talk with, try to think of an activity that would pull as many of these people as possible together for a common activity. For example, if you talk with a number of people and discover that they have a variety of different hobbies, you might try to form a general interest “hobby club” rather than focusing in on just one particular hobby that only two or three people might share.

There are several other things that you will want to take into consideration as you talk with potential participants for a group; first of all, their schedules. Everyone is very, very busy today. If you are going to have a successful special interest Bible study, the group must meet at a time and location that is convenient for the maximum number of members. Right after school on a weekday afternoon is often a good time for children to meet. Sunday evening might be the best time for teenagers. Adults might like a weekday evening or a Saturday morning. And older adults might be more willing to attend a meeting on a weekday morning.

Another question to consider is how often the group will meet. This may be dictated by the activity that you use. For example, an exercise class might want to meet several times each week while a book discussion group might only meet every other week or once a month. Again, one of the big determining factors will be the schedules of the participants.

As we plan activities within the church, we often don’t really think about who we want to reach, why we want to reach them or what we want them to get out of the program. We often just take for granted that the people will be there and that they will get something good out of the experience. However, most people today are much more selective of the activities in which they become involved. One of the characteristics of today’s young adults is that when they are asked to become involved in a group or activity they tend to ask, “What’s in it for me?” They might not ask the question out loud, but you can almost be sure that it’s there in the back of their mind. And I believe that if we are asking someone to come to our church or Sunday school or get involved in something like a special interest Bible study group, it’s a question that we’d better be able to answer.

Why should people come to your special interest Bible study group? Later in this article we will talk more about promoting your group and recruiting members. But as you start to think about planning a group of any type, you must be very clear about your purpose, who you want to reach, what you want them to learn and the changes that you would like to see come about in their lives, both as a result of the activities and from the Bible study.

**The Bible Study.** Even though you will have a featured activity to attract participants to the group, you still want to make the primary purpose of the group the Bible study. And because the Bible study is to be an important part of any special interest Bible study group, selecting the topics and scriptures for the study and a teacher to lead the study should be given as much or more thought and consideration as the rest of your planning.

For some groups you might want to use Bible study topics that are directly related to the activity. For example, a group of kids who are gathering to trade baseball cards might be interested in using Bible studies based on the lives of Christian athletes, or members of a dieting group might be interested in learning what the scriptures say about healthy living. Other groups might be interested in a more general study or perhaps you might see a particular need that your students have and try to fashion a Bible study to meet those needs.

Finding study and curriculum materials to use with specialized studies can often be a problem. The place to begin would be your local Christian bookstore. If you can’t find what you are looking for there, go to the Internet. And if both of those locations still have you searching for study guides that will meet your needs, you can always write your own lesson materials.

I can just imagine many of you gasping in horror, saying, “What? Me plan my own Bible study and write my own lessons? I could never do that!” Well, I think you could! In fact, later in this article we will look at specific ideas on how you can plan and teach your Bible study lesson – great lessons that will be interesting, fun and relevant to the lives of your students. You don’t have to be a great Biblical scholar and you don’t have to be a great speaker or writer or the most creative person in the world. I think you’ll be surprised to see how you can take a few simple ideas, methods and materials and develop them into a lesson that will make a real impact on the lives of your students. More about that later.

But if you find the idea of creating your own Bible lessons so frightening and intimidating that you wouldn’t even consider it, then I would suggest that you go to your local Christian bookstore or the Internet (Christian Book Distributers is a good place to start) and look through their selection of Bible study and small group study materials. You might also be able to fashion old V.B.S. and Sunday school materials into lessons that you could use.

As you talk with possible participants, you need to be able to tell them about the fun, personal improvement and other benefits that they will get from the activity, but don’t stop there. Don’t try to hide the fact that there will also be a time of Bible study. Talk about the Bible study in a positive way. Tell prospects about the topics that you will be studying and how these topics relate to the activities or to general concerns that they might have. Talk about the Bible study being fun, interesting and relevant. Let students know that the Bible study will be taught using lots of “hands-on,” active/discovery learning methods rather than the dull, boring methods that they might associate with some church and Sunday school programs.

Getting participants involved and making sure that they have fun is important, but what you should really strive for is learning – particularly spiritual and Biblical learning. And what is learning? Learning involves change – a change in a person’s thinking, their knowledge and/or their actions. As you see people involved in your groups, you want them to have an enjoyable experience, find new interests, and increase their knowledge. But most important, you want to see the Bible study and related areas have an affect on the life of each student; you should want to see them grow in their knowledge of the Bible, see them learn more about Jesus Christ and His love for them, come to know Him as personal Lord and Savior, and you want to see them making a commitment to live each day for Him.

**Starting A Special Interest Bible Study Group…**

In the past several sections, we took a look at the four specific ingredients that must be a part of the complete focused Bible study package – the activity, the leaders, the Bible study and the participants. But as you begin to make plans for a special interest Bible study group, it is important to note that even though each of these areas is important by itself, it will also be necessary to consider all of the ingredients together as you begin your planning work. In other words, you can’t just pick a random activity and expect to base a successful group on that alone. You must also consider who the leader will be, someone who has the ability and the knowledge to lead the activity. In addition, you must consider the participants. Who do you want to reach and what are the activities that they would find interesting and appealing? And you need to consider what you might do to link the activity to an interesting and relevant Bible study and who will lead this part of the group.

When you begin to plan a special interest Bible study group, you really need to look at all four areas. And it’s difficult to say exactly where or how you should start. Perhaps you see a particular interest from a group of people in a certain activity. For example, maybe you have a number of new babies in your community and can see the possible need for a parenting class or maybe you hear people talking about needing to lose weight and can see the need for an exercise or dieting class.

You might also start with the leader. Maybe you or another person in your church or community has a particular skill or ability and you can see this as something that could be shared with others through a special interest group. Maybe you enjoy building model airplanes and would like to share your hobby with the children and youth of your community. Or perhaps you know someone who has the talent to take just about any piece of “junk” and turn it into a beautiful craft item. That person might be asked to share their ideas with others through a craft class.

And then you might also start with the potential participants. Maybe you hear people talking about something that interests them, like older adults who would like to learn the basics of computers. You might also use a survey sheet to find out what people are interested in.

In addition to these four major areas of concern, you will also need to consider some of the other things already mentioned, like when the group will meet, how often you will meet and where you will meet. It is important to have plans in place for each detail before you start promoting your group and trying to recruit participants. But it is also important to have input from your potential members as you make your plans.

**Recruiting Participants For Your Group…**

Obviously you can’t have a very successful group if you don’t have any students. The purpose of any Bible study class is to teach the students about God, His Word and His will for their lives. Remember, teaching isn’t teaching until learning takes place and for learning to take place, you will need some students.

Getting students to make a commitment to your special interest study group may be one of the hardest parts of the entire planning process. We live in a time when just about every person of every age finds their schedules full and overflowing. Most people are so busy with work, school, school activities, family and social activities that they won’t even consider anything new. Many people are very reluctant to make more than a week-to-week commitment to new programs and activities. And, for most people to even consider anything new, they want to know the personal or family benefits that they will get out of the activity.

Why should anyone come to the special interest group that you are planning? Before you start to invite people to come to the group, this is a question that you need to answer. Be positive! Focus on the fun, personal improvement and other benefits that the a person will get out of the group – both from the activity and from the Bible study. As mentioned before, don’t try to hide the fact that the group will include a Bible study. The Bible is not what scares most people away from Bible study groups; it’s the bad past experiences with boring teachers and lessons that have had no relevance to their lives. Therefore, you need to be ready to tell potential members about the interesting, relevant and fun things that you will be doing in every group activity.

Before you try to recruit members for your group it is also important to make sure that you have all of the basic elements of the group in place – the activity, the Bible study and the leaders. It is important to remember that many of the people that you approach about being a part of the group will be influenced by one or more of these basic elements. Maybe they have a real interest in the activity or perhaps they know one of the teachers. By having all elements of the group in place and by being able to tell the potential members about the benefits that they can expect, the recruiting process should be a lot easier.

As a part of your basic planning process, you should also have some ideas as to who you want to involve in your group. Is your target group very narrow, like only to elementary school-age boys or young married couples, or is it for a broader group? Knowing the primary target group that you will try to involve will help you as you plan your recruiting drive.

**Promoting Your Focused Bible Study Group…**

To get members involved in your group, you need to get them interested and that involves promotion!

As you begin to think about ways to promote your group, one of the first things that I would suggest is that you create a promotional brochure or flyer about your new special interest Bible study group. This brochure or flyer should include information about the basic elements that will be involved in the group - the activity, the Bible study and the teachers or leaders plus information about when and where the group will be meeting and who to contact if they are interested in becoming a part of the group. It should also tell the prospects about the personal benefits that they will get out of the group. Take your time to carefully plan what you want to say about the group and the best way to say it. Remember to use headlines that will catch the attention of the prospect. Have the flyer or brochure created by someone who is good at computer design, using lots of color, catchy lettering, illustrations, etc. You will also want to keep in mind the age and interest of your target group. Use the activity as the “hook” to get the prospect interested and involved, but don’t try to hide the Bible study. Rather, tell how it will relate to the activity or be interesting or relevant to the life of the student.

Once all of the basic elements for your special interest Bible study group are in place, a promotional brochure has been created and most of the other details have been worked out, it’s time to actually start recruiting new members.

In most cases, person-to-person, face-to-face contacts are best. This means finding a small group of people who will help distribute the promotional brochures and talk with their friends, neighbors and others about the planned group. These people who help promote the event may or may not be prospects for the group themselves; that isn’t always important. But what is important is that these individuals realize the importance of Bible study and the effectiveness of programs like special interest Bible study groups. These persons need to know the target group that you are trying to reach and might even be given a list of specific people that they agree to contact.

As these people talk with others about the planned special interest group, they should tell them briefly about what will be happening – the activity, the Bible study and the leaders. They should give the prospect a copy of the promotional brochure or flyer and then they should invite them to attend. Many times people will not be ready to give a definite commitment right on the spot. If they aren’t ready to give a definite “yes” or “no,” make sure someone gets back to them and follows up the invitation with a phone call or personal contact.

Here’s another good promotional idea to use with children and youth – give them a “ticket” that will admit them to the meeting. Have all of the basic information about the “who, what, where and when” of the group printed on the ticket. Of course, you don’t actually have to have a ticket to attend the meeting – all persons, even those without tickets, are certainly welcome – but the ticket will serve as a reminder about the meeting and will be an encouragement for many people to attend. Knowing how many “tickets” have been distributed can also help you gauge your publicity and potential attendance.

Another very personal way of communicating is the telephone. The phone can be especially effective as a follow-up or reminder tool. Once you have talked in person with a prospect, a phone call is a great way to follow up and extend a reminder about the group. E-mails and text messages are another great way of reminding prospects about the meetings. Many churches have established phone, text message and E-mail directories that could be of help as you promote your group through these methods. Don’t forget that your church website is another great tool for promoting events and encourage your church members and friends to use their social media contacts to promote your new special interest Bible study group, too.

One other quick note about E-mails; I have a good friend who E-mails every member of the small group that he leads several days before each meeting. In the E-mail he usually asks a question or in some way gives the members something to think about before they come to the next meeting. The E-mail also is a great reminder to each of the members about the meeting and an invitation for them to bring a friend.

Other ideas that you might consider to promote your special interest Bible study group would include your weekly church bulletin, announcements within the regular weekly services, your monthly church newsletter, posters, letters mailed to prospects, “door knockers” (announcement cards that are hung on the door knobs of the homes in your area) and door-to-door visitation.

If you want to promote the group throughout your community, you might also consider announcements in your local newspapers, public service announcements on your local radio stations, posters, your church signboard and others. But, again, remember that your most effective publicity and recruitment will come through the personal contacts and invitations that you and others extend to friends, neighbors, co-workers, family members, etc.

An old hymn reminds us that we should “give our best to the Master.” As you plan your special interest Bible study group and as you invite prospects to come and be a part of the group, remember that you are called to give and do your very best for Christ. Our Lord doesn’t want your halfhearted efforts; he wants your very best! As you think about starting a special interest Bible study group, make sure that you and everyone involved are willing to do their best. Christ gave his all for you! What are you doing for him?

**Leading The Group’s Special Activities…**

Because the list of topics and activities on which a special interest Bible study group could be based is so varied, it’s almost impossible to set down a list of specific rules and guidelines that teachers might use as they lead these activities. Remembering that these groups might also include a wide variety of persons who come from a wide variety of backgrounds and who are of a wide variety of ages, it becomes even more difficult to say exactly how or what a teacher should do as they lead a group activity. In other words, the leader of the group’s activity will, in many cases, need to be a little creative and develop their own teaching plan for the activities.

But even though specific rules for teaching every special interest group activity might not be possible, there are a number of general guidelines that the teacher should keep in mind:

First, the teacher needs to know their subject. This knowledge might come from the person’s work experience, education, hobbies or other source. And, of course, they need to have a genuine interest in sharing this information with others. But even though the teacher might have a basic knowledge of the activity subject, they may feel that they do not have enough background or knowledge to teach others. In that case, the teacher might want to “bone up” by checking out additional information on the subject. Information on just about every possible subject can be found today in books at your local library or from the Internet.

The next most important thing for every teacher to remember is about the importance of preparation and planning. Earlier I mentioned that the average Sunday school teacher today only spends about 15 minutes in preparing their weekly lesson. Is that enough time to properly plan any kind of lesion? I don’t think so! I believe that every teacher needs to make a real commitment to the job to which they have been called. Teaching needs to be a priority not an afterthought. If your specialinterest Bible study is to be a success, all of the teachers need to be prepared well.

Other general guidelines that every teacher should keep in mind might include.

* Keep it fun.
* Keep it interesting.
* As much as possible, involve the students in the activity.
* Keep your teaching “age appropriate.”
* Encourage students to ask questions.
* Don’t lecture, guide.
* Encourage discussion and thought.
* As much as possible, use a variety of activities and teaching methods in each presentation.
* Combine your instruction, information and education with hands-on student activities.
* Encourage “discovery learning.”
* Give the students “work sheets” that contain basic information and ideas from each lesson.
* Encourage students to continue working or reading outside of the class, but don’t expect students (especially children and youth) to do a lot of “homework.”
* Share what you know; don’t be afraid to use personal experiences.
* Remember your time limit and plan appropriately.

One other important thing to keep in mind is the attention span of your students. As a general rule, if you take the age of the student in years and then cross out the word “years” and substitute the word “minutes,” you will have the approximate attention span for children and youth. A five-year-old, about five minutes. A ten-year-old, about ten minutes. Unfortunately, the theory doesn’t work very well for adults. If you expect to get a full hour of attention from a group of 60-year-olds, you will probably be disappointed unless you have a really great and interesting presentation.

Why do we need to think about our students’ attention spans? It means that rather than boring students by using one single activity or method for the entire lesson period, you will be much more successful by using several shorter activities that employ a variety of teaching methods and activities that each relate to the general area of interest. And even though this is a strategy that is most often used in teaching children and youth, it’s also an important thing to keep in mind if you are teaching adults.

**Selecting The Bible Study Topics For Your Group…**

Throughout this book we have noted that the “special interest activity” is the “hook” to get people interested and to get them involved, but the Bible study is the real reason for your group. Most participants in your group will first come because of their interest in the activity, but they need to be aware that there will also be a time of Bible study. As I have said before, you don’t want to “hide” the Bible study or try to “sneak it in” on unsuspecting victims, rather you should try to make it interesting, relevant and attractive for each of the participants.

To have a Bible study that is “interesting, relevant and attractive” will require some work and planning on the part of those who plan the group and by the teacher. Probably the most important part of this planning will be to select topics for the Bible study…a topic that will be “interesting, relevant and attractive” to the prospective students. One of the best ways to do this is to try, as much as possible, to relate the studies to the general interests of the group as defined by the activity that has brought everyone together.

For example, young couples would probably be very interested in what the Bible says about families and raising children. Members of a group that gather to discuss movies, books or music would probably be interested in what the Bible says about the messages that are conveyed through modern media. And an arts and crafts group might explore the scriptures to find out what the Bible says about using one’s talents and abilities for the Lord.

Once you have decided on the topic or theme for your group’s Bible study, the next step is either to find a prepared study about your selected topic or for you to write your own Bible studies. If you are going to try to find prepared curriculum materials to use, the place to start would probably be your local Christian bookstore. Most Christian bookstores stock a wide variety of Bible study materials and can order even more. Talk with someone at the bookstore and tell them what you are looking for. They should be able to tell you if they have any study materials on the topics that you have selected. They may also be able to direct you to books and other resources that relate to your theme. The Internet is another great place to look for Bible study curriculum materials.

If you absolutely cannot find a prepared curriculum study that fits your needs, you will probably need to consider writing your own study. This may sound like a rather daunting task to many people, but it probably won’t be as hard or as much work as you think.

If you are planning to write your own Bible study, the place to start would be by identifying as many passages as you can find in the Bible that relate to your study topic. Use a concordance, topical concordance or a resource book like Nelson Publishing’s “Where To Find It In The Bible” (a book that lists over 3,700 contemporary topics and scriptures that relate to each) to identify verses and passages that relate to your topic; passages that could be used as the basis for your Bible study.

You probably will want to have at least one passage or several Bible verses as the basis for each week’s study. A good way to start might be to select either four or six different passages or verses that could be used for the first four or six meetings of your group. After you have selected the verses or passages that you will use, write a short sentence or two on 3” x 5” cards about what you see as the connection between each scripture and the general topic that you are using for your Bible studies.

Next, look at the passages and the information about each that you have written. Use this information to put the passages into the order in which you will use them for your meetings. Generally, you would start with a lesson that will either be an introduction or overview of the entire study or your purpose. Subsequent lessons will probably follow a progression that will lead the students through a study that will take an increasingly deeper look at the topic or at adding additional information through each lesson.

**What will Be Your “Aim” For Each Lesson?**

Once you have decided on the scriptures that you will use, their basic connection to your topic and the order in which you will use the passages, it’s time to begin to actually put your study together. The place to start any lesson plan or outline is by establishing your aim.

When we talk about the aim for each lesson, what are we talking about? Well, first, let’s think about what an aim is not. If you are using a prepared curriculum, your aim is not the title of the lesson. It is not even the heading title that is listed in your Bible for the passage that you will be studying. The aim is the specific purpose for the lesson that directly relates to the problems, needs, concerns and interests that you see in the students that you will be teaching. In other words, it’s the primary thing you want your students to learn from the experience.

Far too many Bible lessons are presented in a sort of “shotgun” manner. The information is just shot out there in hopes that something will hit someone and maybe be of interest or importance to them. Rather than just shooting blindly in all different directions, establishing a definite aim for the lesson helps you target the lesson to those specific concerns that you see in your students.

Establishing an aim involves asking the question, “What do I want my students to learn from this lesson? This will help give your lesson purpose and it will help you select the teaching methods and tools that will be used to present the lesson.

Once you have selected the aim for each lesson and have a clear purpose and objective for the study session, selecting the elements that will be used in the lesson presentation will be a lot easier.

**Teaching The Bible Study For Your Group…**

Whether you are using actual Bible study curriculum materials or writing your own study, it is essential for the teacher to be very well prepared and to have a complete outline for every lesson.

As the teacher begins to put together each weekly lesson outline, it is important for them to remember to start their planning early. The best time to start planning for next week’s lesson is as soon as this week’s lesson is done. Early in the week the teacher needs to read the scriptures and skim through the curriculum. As the teacher starts to think about this material, they need to establish their aim for the lesson. As the week goes along, they need to build on the lesson aim by selecting the teaching methods, tools and other elements that they will include in the lesson presentation and use it to write an outline for the lesson.

Whether the teacher is using a prepared curriculum or writing their own lessons, the material to be included in your lesson outline will be basically the same. As a general rule, each Bible lesson should include three distinctive parts – the opening (how you will get the lesson off to a good, interesting start and get the students involved), the body of the lesson (this is the “meat” of the lesson, where most of the actual Bible learning will take place) and the closing (this should include a summary or review of the lesson, ideas for the application of the lesson and possibly a look ahead to next week). Here are some things to consider:

* 1. **How will you start the lesson?** As you set about planning, remember that you don’t need to be pounding facts and information into the heads of your students during every minute of every lesson. Yes, you want to have some very serious times of learning, but you also want your students to relax, have a little fun, be active, stay interested and enjoy the total lesson experience. Sitting for 30 minutes while listening to a steady stream of facts and figures being preached in a boring presentation is not an enjoyable experience, especially for children and youth. For your students to get the most out of each lesson, they need to enjoy the experience. And remember, if they learn one important lesson from the class – something that truly produces a change in their thinking or their actions – the teacher has been wildly successful! Success should not be measured in the volume of facts and information that you can pound into your students but by the quality of what they really learn and put into practice in their lives.

As you begin to create your lesson outline, the first thing you need to plan is the opening for the lesson. Someone has observed that “as goes the first five minutes of a class period, so will probably go the rest of the lesson.” That’s true! If you start dull and boring, that’s probably the way the rest of the lesson will go. But, if you start in an exciting, interesting way, you have a good shot at maintaining that excitement and interest through the rest of the lesson.

The teacher’s goal should be to “start with a bang;” starting in a way that will catch the attention of the students and get them involved, focused and prepared for the learning to follow.

The opening activity is not necessarily meant to teach any deep spiritual lesson. These activities may simply be fun. They could be “mixers” to get the students acquainted or “ice breakers” to get their minds focused and ready for the study to follow. Games and physical activities are good. Objects that the students can see and touch can get them interested. You also might use a word, a map, a story from everyday life, a story from the scriptures, a current event or newspaper article, music, a question, a photo, a video clip, a quote or a drawing to get the lesson off to a good start.

1. **What basic teaching methods and/or tools will you use?** Next you want to think about the “body of the lesson.” This is the place where you will use a variety of activities to help the students learn the primary Bible lesson of the day. Before we think about specific elements that might be used to put together the body of the lesson, there are several things that you need to remember.

First, you need to remember that just like your body is made up of many different parts, so the bodies of the best lessons should be made up of a variety of different parts and activities. You need to remember the attention span of the students that you will be teaching. Then, by using a variety of appropriate activities, you should plan a presentation that will keep the students’ attention and help them learn the lesson you have in mind for the day.

Second, you need to be aware that different students learn in different ways. As you present your lessons by using a variety of activities, utilizing a variety of learning styles, more students can find things in your lesson tailored to their personal needs and the learning style or styles that they prefer.

As you plan the methods and tools that you will use, it is also important to remember that students learn the most when they are involved in the actual learning process. This is called “active/discovery learning;” learning by doing. Researchers tell us that the average person remembers about 10% of what they hear, about 20% of what they see, but up to 90% of what they do. That’s why it’s so important to involve the students in the actual learning process.

Examples of good “active/discovery learning” include:

* Direct experiences. This might include making crafts and then taking them to a nursing home or involving the students as helpers at a homeless mission.
* Role-play. This is where people are given parts to play in contrived situations. There is no prepared dialogue; the participants just “wing it.”
* Demonstrations. Things like magic tricks and science experiments or “guess the object in the mystery box” are forms of demonstrations.
* Purposeful games. These might include active games like “Simon says,” word games or other activities to illustrate the lesson aim or as a springboard for making a particular lesson point.
* Purposeful activities. These are usually group activities. They might include things like giving the students a number of craft sticks and a roll of masking tape and having them work together to build their own “Tower of Babel” (This is a way to illustrate working together.) or you might have an assortment of ingredients that could be used to make brownies but have no recipe. Let the students make their own “brownies” by combining what they think would go into them. Bake a little of the batter and taste. (This is a good illustration of the importance of planning and seeing God’s plan for our lives.)
* Bible search. Have concordances and other Bible reference books available for students to use as they search for verses in the Bible that speak about the theme of the day. You might have them paraphrase the verse and put it into their own language or put it into the form of a bumper sticker slogan.
* Drama. Let the students rewrite a Bible story or scene and put it into their own words or modern situations. (Jesus’ parables like “The Prodigal Son” and “The Good Samaritan” work very well for this.) Then allow the students to act out the story or present it with puppets.
* Interviews. Have students interview members of the congregation to ask them questions about their faith. For example, “How important is prayer to you and why?” You might also use a video camera to record these interviews.
* Video. Let students use a video camera to crate their own “commercial about the lesson topic. For example, you might create a commercial for what the Bible says about healthy eating.
* Research projects. Research projects encourage students to work together to dig deeper and find more information related to the topic or issue being studied. For example, you might have students go back through old church records and then chart Sunday school and worship attendance. They could then use this information to help plan ways to build church attendance.
* Personal expression through arts and crafts. You might give students a lump of clay and have them sculpt something that illustrates the lesson theme. You might also allow the students to express ideas and feelings through other art forms.
* Scavenger hunt. Send students to search for objects to illustrate the lesson theme. The hunt might be in the area around the church, only in the church or just in the room where you are meeting. Rather than having the students bring back the actual scavenger hunt item, you might have them use a digital camera to take a picture of the item or just make a list of what they find. You can also do a virtual scavenger hunt by looking for objects in the Bible or in mgazines.
* Field trips. Take students to visit locations in your community related to your Bible study topic or your general activity. You could also take a “field trip” in your church or with the aid of a video, DVD or the Internet.
* Special guests. Invite persons from within your church and others to share personal experiences related to your topic of study.

Active/discovery learning is focused through debriefing. Once you have used an active/discovery learning activity, don’t just end it and move on. Talk with the students about what they have done and how they felt during the activity. Ask, “What does this mean to you?” and “What will we do about it?” as you use the activity to illustrate your lesson and to focus the students toward putting the lesson to work in their lives.

Active/discovery learning activities will also often create “teachable moments.” Teachable moments provide some of the best opportunities for discovery learning. As situations arise within the classroom, don’t just ignore or pass over the situation; take advantage of it and use it to help illustrate a positive lesson. For example, if a child shares a concern because his grandfather is very sick, Use this “teachable moment” to talk with the kids and then to pray for the one who is sick. Teachable moments can help students ask the question, “What would Jesus do?” and then to look at the Bible as you try to find what it says about the question.

One other note to add here: In several of the “active/discovery learning” examples we listed, we talked about students working together as groups. One of the hottest trends in modern education is “interactive learning.” Interactive learning involves students in working together on projects. Classes are usually divided into groups of two to five students, depending on the size of the group, to work on projects and learn from each other as they work together toward the common goal. Through interactive learning activities, students are focused on cooperation rather than competition.

**Story Telling…**

Story telling is another very effective teaching method. Long before there was writing, history and traditions were being passed down from generation to generation verbally through stories. The Bible tells us that the early Jews were great at passing on their traditions and information about God and His relationship with their nation through stories. In fact, we believe that many of the stories that are recorded in our Bible today were first passed down orally, from person to person, until they were finally written down.

Jesus was the master storyteller. What we know as the parables of Jesus are among the best and most effective stories ever used to illustrate moral truths, God’s kingdom, faith and the many other things that Jesus was trying to teach.

Today, storytelling continues to be a very effective method of teaching for all ages. Stories can introduce students to other times and cultures. They allow them to “walk in someone else’s shoes.” They lead to greater understanding of cause and effect. They teach lessons that are contained in the stories and are delivered in a nonthreatening way. And, yes, stories can be a lot of fun.

Before the teacher decides to tell a story as a part of their lesson, there are some things that they should remember. First, some storytelling “do’s”…

* Select a story that is on the students’ age and intellectual level.
* Read and study the story carefully.
* Know the characters and plot well.
* Use lots of dialog.
* Assemble props and pictures that will be used to illustrate the story.
* Practice.
* Maintain eye contact.
* Use your voice carefully and effectively. Vary your tone, mood and loudness to set the mood and add drama to the story.

Then some “don’t’s” for story telling…

* Don’t talk down to your students.
* Don’t rely on only Bible stories to get across your point.
* Don’t distract attention from your story with unnecessary actions or by wearing unusual clothing.
* Don’t interrupt yourself with corrections.
* Don’t moralize. Good stories often do not spell out the meaning at the end. The meaning discloses itself as the story develops.

It is also important to remember that stories don’t have to be told only through the traditional setting of the teacher talking while the students sit quietly and listen. Storytelling aids such as a short video presentation, a chalkboard, an overhead projector, objects or props, reading as a dialog, and puppets can be effective in helping to focus the student’s attention as you involve even more of their senses in the story and learning experience.

“Active/discovery learning” activities and story telling are both very effective teaching methods, but they are far from the only effective teaching methods that are available to today’s teacher. In fact, the list of methods that can be incorporated into preparing and presenting a lesson are almost endless. Just about anything that you can do, just about any object, just about anything you can say can be used as a learning experience. It’s all how the teacher uses these things, these situations and these activities.

Additional teaching methods might include: creative writing, speaking, singing, musical performance, maps, games, debate, poetry, jokes dance, sports, miming, graphs, Bible search, pictures, discussion, simulation games, codes and many more.

When selecting teaching methods for your class, remember:

* The method should fit the educational objectives of the lesson.
* The method should fit the abilities and interests of the students.
* The method should involve the whole student, requiring the use of several senses.
* The method should involve all of the students in the group.

**Teaching Tools To Consider Using…**

A tool, by definition, is something used in performing an operation or necessary in the practice of a job: a means to an end. It’s something that makes a job easier. I’ve never met a good teacher who didn’t appreciate all of the help that he or she could get. Good teachers are always looking for “tools” that will make their teaching better, easier and more effective. Popular teaching tools available to today’s teacher include:.

* Video projector. Video projectors are the modern version of the old overhead projector. These machines can project images directly from a computer onto a screen. Video projectors are great; however, with a price tag of between $500 and $5,000, their use may be limited in some churches.
* TVs – Today’s flatscreen televisions are great for use in the church. Today just about every church has a TV in each of their Christian education rooms. Teachers can just plug their computer into the TV to illustrate their lesson.
* Flannel board. This is an older teaching tool that can be just as useful today as ever. The flannel graph allows the teacher to manipulate the material visually as desired. Students can also be allowed to use the same figures to retell the lesson and to assist in a review of the lesson. Colorful homemade visuals can be produced from construction paper. Games, contests and memory work are just a few of the presentations that can be placed on the flannel board.
* Objects. To touch, to feel, to guess or to collect, are all part of working with this tool. Perhaps you can introduce an object from a “mystery box” and add suspense to any lesson. Bringing in objects from nature, or familiar items found around the house and the community, can be used to reinforce a lesson. Simple magic tricks, scissor cuttings and models are other forms of object lessons.
* Sound recordings. With the availability of computers and CD players, new audio dimensions have been added to the classroom. When once phonograph records were dominant, today the entire field of music and audio information is readily available at the push of a button. Recording equipment can also be used by teachers to record their own lesson for self-evaluation. Many songs and “sound bytes” can also be downloaded from the Internet.
* Puppets. Puppets in the classroom serve a variety of purposes other than just entertainment. As an assistant to the teacher, puppets can be used to introduce a new song, announce a visitor or recite a memory verse. Teachers can allow the puppets to be the “referee” for games and quizzes, to sing special music or deliver an object for an object lesson. Students can be encouraged to use the puppets to act out a story or to retell a lesson as a part of review. Often older teens and parents will come to the classroom to serve as puppeteers, if needed.
* Drawings, sketches, charts and maps. Today, almost anyone can be a clever artist with the variety of books on the market that even show how to take letters of the alphabet and change them into characters. Using a blackboard, whiteboard, a piece of poster board or an overhead projector, the teacher can draw an outline or a sketch that will help explain a lesson point.
* Video. The variety of topics available on video and DVD is almost endless. Videos are available for sale and for rent from film libraries, public libraries, Christian bookstores and denominational offices at little or no cost. This format provides an exciting, dramatic presentation of a story that can be skillfully followed up with discussion and/or review. Even short segments of secular movies and TV shows can be used as discussion starters with youth and adult classes. And remember, video is about more than just your TV-VCR or DVD player. Think of ways that you can use the video and photography capabilities of your student’s smartphones, video cameras and digital cameras as teaching tools, too.
* Computers. Computers can be especially effective with children and youth, who regularly use them in school and at home. Many very good teaching programs are now available for use on computers. These include Bible games, simulation games, Bible lessons, virtual tours, educational software and more. It is also possible to get the Bible, books and other resources for your computer. And don’t forget to check out the Internet for ideas, resources and much more.

One additional reminder about teaching methods and teaching tools. As you think about selecting the methods and tools that you will use in presenting your lesson, always remember that the tool and the method should be selected because they will fit into your lesson plan and make your presentation better, easier, more interesting or more relevant. You should never put a teaching method into your lesson plan simply because it sounds like a good idea or it might be fun. Teaching methods must be relevant to the lesson’s theme and help you reach your overall aim. The same goes for teaching tools. Don’t use a video projector just because you have one. Use it or any other tool because it fits into your plan and will make your job of presenting the lesson easier and more effective.

1. **What questions will you ask?** No matter what methods or tools you are planning to use, there will undoubtedly be many opportunities during the lesson for you to stimulate additional thought and discussion by asking questions. Many good teachers seem to be able to think of questions as they go along through their lesson, but for most of us, it’s a good idea to write down the questions that we will use during the lesson.

Basically, there are three types of questions:

* Information questions. These are questions that ask for a recall of facts.
* Analysis questions. These are questions that ask the students to make a comparison or application of information.
* Personal response questions. These are the “what do you think?” or opinion type of questions. They put the student into the situation and ask them how they would respond or what they think.

Information questions are best used for review or as you summarize a lesson. They are used to make sure that the students have learned the lessons and have gotten the facts that you want them to learn. But, as you ask information questions, keep in mind that the understanding of the concept or meaning of a lesson or story is much more important than knowing the exact words, facts and figures. Don’t get hung up on searching for one word that really doesn’t have a lot of meaning relative to the lesson. I’ve heard it said that “ten good answers are often better than one perfect answer.”

As you use questions throughout your lesson, most of the questions that you use should be designed to make the students think. Good questions require more than a “yes” or “no” answer. When students give their initial response to your question, follow it up with a “why” question to get them thinking even deeper. But remember, when you ask students to think, give them a chance to think. When you ask a question and no one responds immediately, don’t think that you have to jump right in and talk. Allowing students to discuss a question in small groups or having students write their answer may be helpful.

Another important note about “what-do-you-think” questions. If you are asking a student for his or her opinion, don’t put them down because their response might not be exactly what you think it should be. There should be no wrong answers to opinion questions. For example, if a student gives an answer that is unbiblical, the teacher should try to direct the students to an understanding of what the Bible says or how a Christian should respond. But again, don’t put down the student. If you do, you may find that the students will stop giving honest answers or, even worse, stop attending your meetings.

As mentioned earlier, most teachers find it helpful to write down some of the important questions that they want to ask as they plan their lesson. That doesn’t mean that these are the only questions the teacher might ask. As the lesson progresses, questions will often come to the teacher and often one question will generate other questions. Encourage your students to ask questions, too. And remember, if you don’t know the answer, say so! These hard questions often provide an opportunity to dig even deeper into the issues that are important to the students. If the teacher doesn’t know the answer to one of the student’s questions, talk with your pastor, check the Bible, check other books, check the Internet and encourage the students to try to find the answer, too.

1. **How will you close the lesson?** I’ve talked about ways of opening your lesson and the importance of “starting with a bang.” I’ve also talked about the body of the lesson and some of the different methods and tools that can be used in its presentation. But now I want to turn to another important part of your overall plan and presentation – how you close your lesson.

What should a teacher do when they realize that they have only about five minutes left in the class period? For far too many teachers, it becomes “panic time.” They look at the clock and then at their lesson plan and realize that they have only covered about half or less of the material that they wanted to cover. So what do they do? They panic, put it into high gear and try to cram as much of the remaining material as possible into those last few minutes.

Is this what the teacher should do? Certainly not! First of all, they shouldn’t worry about what they didn’t cover. If they were able to help the students learn something from what was covered – something that they can really use, something that can affect their lives or their actions – then the teacher has been wildly successful. Perhaps they had an opportunity to use a “teachable moment” and maybe didn’t even get to their lesson outline. Again, if the students were interested, if they got excited, if the lesson touches their lives and helped meet their needs, the teacher has done a great job. They shouldn’t worry about what they didn’t get to. If the material was really important, pick up the lesson at that point next time. If not, move on.

So, when there’s only about five minutes left in your class session, stop! The first thing to do is summarize what has been covered in the lesson. The teacher might list important facts or notes related to the lesson aim on a blackboard. Ask questions to make sure that the students have grasped what the teacher wanted them to learn. Ask students to paraphrase the important messages of the lesson and to put those messages into their own words. Make sure that they know what the teacher was trying to get across to them in a way that they can verbalize and a way that is relevant to their lives and their needs.

The next thing that the teacher should do is talk to your students about applying the lesson to their lives. What would you think of a man who went to college and then medical school for eight years or more, but when he graduated, never did anything with his knowledge? He never established a practice or saw a single patient. We’d think that it was a big waste, wouldn’t we? Well, that’s what many Christians do. They read their Bible. They attend church, Sunday school and other Bible study groups. They can quote all kinds of scripture and are just loaded with knowledge in their head, but that’s as far as it ever gets. They never do anything with it. They never put it to use in their lives. What a waste!

One of the most important parts of every Bible lesson – no matter what the age of the students – is the application. As the teacher summarizes the material covered in the day’s lesson, they should ask this question: “What are we going to do with this information and this lesson that we have learned? As much as possible, involve the students in helping to answer this question and get their ideas on things that they could do with the lesson to put it into action in their day-to-day lives. Teachers should also be prepared to give specific ideas to the students about things that they can do.

For example, if the lesson was about prayer, give the students a card that has prayer reminders listed for each day of the upcoming week. Or if the lesson was about loving others, talk about specific responses that they should make if someone says something mean or hurtful to them.

As you come to the end of your Bible study time, it is also important to take a brief look ahead to what you will be doing next week. True, you probably won’t be able to get many of your students – especially children and youth – to do much “homework” for your group. But it’s still important to give them an idea about what you will be doing next time. You might give them a card that lists the scripture to be studied next week and urge them to read the passage before they come to the next meeting. You might list several questions on the same card for the students to think about.

And then, as you come to the end of your meeting, close with prayer. Whatever your focused activity and your Bible study topics, prayer should be an important part of every lesson for every student. I hope that you and the teachers of your special interest study group believe that there is indeed power in prayer. I hope that you pray regularly. And I hope that you will pray for each of your students regularly and encourage the students to pray for each other. Prayer is so powerful, yet many people – even many Christians – often fail to tap into the power that is available. That’s why it is so important that all persons of all ages be taught about prayer, encouraged to establish their own active prayer lives and seek every opportunity to go to God in prayer.

Prayer helps us strengthen our relationship with God. Prayer helps us seek God and the direction that he has for our lives. Prayer helps give us strength to stand up to temptation. Through prayer God wants us to tell Him our desires, our fears, our hopes, and He wants us to “sing songs of joy” to Him when we are happy. Prayer before meals and at bedtime is good, but He wants to hear from us more often than that. He wants to be involved in all areas of our lives, to comfort us when we are sad, to strengthen us when we are scared and to laugh with us when we are happy. And, as we pray, we also need to learn to listen. Through prayer, God speaks to us, to help us know His will and the things that he wants us to do.

As you close your meeting, close with prayer. Ask God’s blessing on all of your activities. Pray for God’s guidance, direction and protection for each of your members. Pray that God will help each person be a witness for Him and for the special needs that you and the students in the class may have made known or have in their hearts. You might ask members to pray sentence prayers. You might ask a different student to have the closing prayer each week. With children, you might use “finish the sentence prayers,” where the kids complete the sentences that you begin (for example “Lord, thank you for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,” or “Lord, please help \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_,”)

One other very important thing to keep in mind. For many people, membership in your special interest Bible study group may be their only contact with a Christian group or the church. It may also be the only opportunity that you or anyone within your church has to tell these persons about Jesus Christ, his great love for them and the Way of Salvation that is available through him. Therefore, you should, from time to time, look for opportunities to present a message of salvation to your students and to challenge them to accept Jesus Christ as their own personal Lord and Savior.

Ask God to show you opportunities to witness to your students about your faith and your own personal experiences as you came to know Jesus Christ and how you sought his forgiveness. Also, ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit as you present these important messages to the entire class and to individual students. And please note, when we talk about witnessing and presenting a message of salvation to students, we are not just talking about children and youth. Remember, there may be adults – of all ages – in your group who don’t know Jesus Christ as Savior. Helping each class member to make a greater spiritual commitment to Jesus Christ – no matter what their age – should always be one of the primary goals of any Bible study experience.

**Making Effective Use Of The Bible…**

It’s something that you might assume every Christian education teacher would be well aware of and know how to do without any problem. What am I talking about? I’m talking about the whole area related to effectively using the Bible in teaching a Bible study group.

Some teachers might ask, “How could you possibly teach a ‘Bible study’ without using the Bible?” It sounds like something that shouldn’t happen, but believe me, I’ve seen teachers who have tried to do it. And I’ve also seen many people – children, youth and adults – who participate in a Bible study as students who don’t make any use of the Bible either.

The Bible should be seen as the textbook for any Bible study and every participant in your group study should see it as the basis for the group and the Bible study in which they are involved. Curriculum materials and quarterlies are just tools and guides. As the textbook for the study, the teacher and all students present should have a Bible and the lessons should be structured so that all persons are encouraged to make use of the book and refer to it often throughout each lesson.

The Bible is our “handbook for life.” The Bible tells us what’s right and what’s wrong. It shows us examples of persons who have followed God and those who have rejected His leading. And it shows us Jesus Christ, His teachings and the Way of Salvation that is available through Him.

Why are Bible study groups important? Because they help persons of all ages learn about God, His Word and His will for their lives. Why is the Bible important? Because of the central character in the book – Jesus Christ! And why is Jesus Christ important? Because, as he said it himself, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me.” (John 14:6)

Several years ago the “W.W.J.D.?” slogan was very popular and is still seen today. The letters, of course, stand for “What Would Jesus Do?” There is no better model for our lives than Jesus Christ and there is certainly no better example for any person of any age to follow than Jesus. But, to ask “What Would Jesus Do?” requires some basic knowledge of what Jesus actually did and said. And how can you find out what Jesus did and what Jesus said? You need to read and study the book that tells his story – the Bible!

If your Bible study is to be truly effective and make a real difference in the lives of the students involved, you need to make sure that you are using the Bible and that you use it effectively in your study. To that end, here are a few suggestions to keep in mind:

* The teacher should use their Bible in leading the Bible study. Let students see you refer to the Bible often. Lay your curriculum book or teaching outline on the table in front of you and hold a Bible in your hand as you teach.
* Encourage each of the students to bring their Bible to class each week. If some students do not have a Bible, talk with your church or friends about raising money to buy a Bible for each member to have as their own.
* Free Bible apps are available for student’s computers and smartphones. If they do not have a Bible app on one of these devices, encourage them to get one.
* Make the scriptures interesting. Adapt Bible stories to the age level you are teaching. Use drama, role play and other methods to present Bible stories and truths to students.
* Help students to see God at work through history and in the world today.
* Encourage students to read their Bibles each day. You might give small awards to encourage the practice.
* Help students to see the Bible as a positive book. The Bible is not a rule book to keep us from having fun. Approach Bible study as if you were about to discover the greatest news you ever heard.
* Present the Bible as a book that is understandable. The Bible is more than mere literature. The values and principles of the Bible are as relevant today as ever.
* Assume nothing. Many people don’t even know the basics of the Bible. Be careful not to look down on those who do not know a lot about the Bible.
* Teach with intensity. Getting students excited about the Bible first requires the teachers and leaders of your group being excited. The Bible is awesome because God is awesome:
* Invite students to meet Jesus. Some students are bored with Bible study because they don’t know Jesus. When students understand God’s purpose and His love, when they see God working in the scriptures, they will be more interested in the Bible and learning what it has to say to them.

**As You Prepare and Present Your Bible Lesson…**

* Learning something is more important than covering everything. If you can help students learn one single essential point from each lesson, you will be wildly successful.
* Watch your language. Don’t use “churchy” words. Words like “grace,” “salvation” and others may be familiar to Christians but have little meaning to non-Christians.
* Understanding is always more important than memorization. Memorization is important, but I would always prefer to have a child who could tell me what John 3:16 means than one who simply can recite the words of the verse.
* Learn to motivate the students. Learn and use the names of each of the students. (Name tags will help you get started.) Be a handshake and “hello” person. Use “we” and “us” (“We have work to do.”) Give pupils treats. Recognize talents and accomplishments.
* Understand the diversity of the students in the class. Love all students unconditionally. Strive to reach all students. Strive to connect all students to the group. Each pupil is different. Each is an individual. Each is created and placed here on earth by God for the purpose of becoming His child. God loves each individual student. God has entrusted the development of these students – whatever their age – to you.
* Teaching a Bible study class is both a great opportunity and a great responsibility. God has entrusted an important part of the spiritual learning and development of each of your students to you. It is a very big responsibility to realize that, as a Bible teacher, you can affect the lives of your students – today, tomorrow and even to eternity. But, helping persons of all ages learn more about Jesus Christ and the love, hope and strength that can be found in Him is also a great opportunity. It can bring great joy and satisfaction to the teacher as they see the lives, understanding and actions of their students changed by the power of God’s Word.
* Through your Bible study, challenge each student to make a greater commitment to God, to reading the Bible and to doing His will. If there are students in your class who do not know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, present them with opportunities to receive Him.

**Notes About Member Safety…**

There is another area that I wish I didn’t have to say much about, but, unfortunately, it’s something that every Christian education teacher and leader and parent must be very concerned about, classroom safety. Classroom safety is an especially important issue when children and youth are involved.

Every time I begin to talk about this whole area in our workshop sessions, I can usually see several people who roll their eyes and say to themselves, “Is this really important? Do we have to listen to this again?” Yes, it is important. Why? Because – like it or not – it happens. Just about a year ago there was an incident in a small rural church in Pennsylvania where a children’s choir director was accused of sexual misconduct around one of the children. This was a person that everyone in the small church thought they knew. Everyone really liked him. But the whole incident could have been avoided if the church would have followed several very basic and simple safety procedures, including running background checks on all volunteers and making sure that there were at least two unrelated adults with the children at all times.

Church leaders should develop an effective plan for safety in the classroom by getting and checking references – including police records – for ALL volunteers, establishing policies, and developing written standards. But it is also important for all volunteers and Christian education teachers to be aware of their responsibilities and liabilities.

Teachers and leaders should not put themselves in a situation where they might be accused of any type of misconduct – intentional or unintentional. Limit physical contact with students. Have activities in an open area or room, not in a private office. Make sure that you have adult helpers with each teacher at all times in the classroom, on field trips and related activities.

There are other questions related to safety that you should address: Do teachers know where to find a fire extinguisher or a first aid kit? If teachers are not trained in first aid, make sure that they know someone close by who is. Make sure that teachers know what to do in the event of a fire or other emergency. How would a teacher notify parents if their child became ill or injured during one of your class sessions? What would they do if someone unknown or uninvited tried to enter their classroom? Remember, the best defense against problems in these areas is to be well informed, well prepared and always thinking about putting the safety of your students first.

**Other General Notes and Reminders…**

* When students aren’t regular in attendance, give them a call or send them a postcard, text message, E-mail or note card with a personal reminder inside. Include any missed lesson sheets to let them know what they missed and that you hope they come back to the group real soon.
* In most special interest Bible study groups, you will not have a large amount of time for either the activity or the Bible study. This means that the leaders need to make the most of the time available. Don’t waste a lot of time on announcements, business and planning.
* What about having refreshments or snacks? This is another of those questions that you should ask and answer right from the start. For many people, refreshments or a snack are a normal part of group activities and any social or fellowship gathering. For this reason, many people might expect light refreshments or a snack to be served at your meeting. On the other hand, depending on the time of day when your group will be meeting and the persons involved, you may find that refreshments would not be appropriate. As a general guide, I would suggest that you talk with several potential members of an adult group or parents of several potential members of a group that will include children or youth to get the input about having a snack at your meetings. If you do decide to have refreshments, keep them healthy and make sure that you are aware of any food allergies or health concerns in group members.

**Giving Your Group A “Club” Appeal…**

Throughout this entire book I have noted that the special interest activity of the meeting is the “lure” or the “hook” to get people interested in participating in the group. But even so, the Bible study should always be seen as the primary purpose and the main activity. And I have also noted that you should never try to hide the fact that the group will include a time of Bible study, but rather talk about the positive aspects of a Bible study and the importance of all persons of all ages being involved in learning more about Jesus Christ, the Bible and God’s will for each person’s life. But does this mean that you can’t be creative in selecting a name for your group and in doing other things that will make your focused group even more appealing and interesting? Certainly not!

Some of the most popular programs for children and youth today involve getting the kids into a “club-type” program. Kids like to think of themselves as being part of a club. It gives them a sense of identity, importance and belonging. And, by doing something as simple as giving the group a catchy name, giving persons a “membership card” and other club items (like club buttons, T-shirts and stickers), members and prospective members will find the group even more fun and appealing. A “club motto” and outside “club activities” (like field trips or social activities as a group) will also help make the group of even more interest.

Several years ago, I read an article in a Christian magazine in which the author contended that one of the problems for Sunday school was the name. He observed that many people – children and youth, in particular – tend to be turned off by the name “school” and many modern people think of “Sunday school” as being old fashioned and out of date. For these reasons, the author of this article proposed that churches should consider other, more modern names for their Sunday school programs; names like “Kids’ Club” or “Bible Fellowship Time.”

I’m not so sure that just putting a new name on the same old program is going to make a real difference. In fact, a survey by the Southern Baptist denomination several years ago seemed to confirm that giving Sunday school a different name didn’t do much to improve attendance. I firmly believe that most of the problems that we have with Sunday school and our other Christian education programs are going to require more than just a new name. But names are important, not just what you call your Sunday school, but what you call your individual classes and what you call your special interest Bible study group.

Names give identity to a group and its members. A good name helps give members a greater appreciation for their group and helps them identify with its purpose. A good, catchy name can also make the group more appealing to prospective members who tend to see a good, creative name as an indication that the group will be interesting and fun. Group names should say something about what the group is or does and, at the same time, it should be interesting, fun and creative. Talk to several prospective members about a possible name for your group or wait until the group begins to meet and allow the members to be involved in selecting the name and other features for their “club.”

**What About Using A Special Interest Bible Study In Sunday School?**

Through this book I have talked about special interest Bible studies as an alternative to Sunday school, but couldn’t they also be used right in Sunday school? Sure they could!

One of the most important features about Sunday school is that we strive to teach all persons according to their age, interest, education and ability. Most churches try to accomplish this by dividing persons by age, but many go even further. Many churches also have elective classes, especially for adults, where the topic for the study is selected according to the interest of the class. I have even seen very specialized classes, like classes for new parents, used in Sunday school. If the purpose of Sunday school is to teach people according to their age and interests, why not use a special interest Bible study right in the Sunday school?

Because most churches divide their Sunday school classes by age, a special interest group study on a topic of interest to all persons in that age group might be a perfect idea for a Sunday school class. But special interest studies could also be of value in a small Sunday school where there are very few persons of the same age. In these situations, intergenerational classes often become necessary and the whole idea of a special interest Bible study could very easily be applied to such an intergenerational class.

**Reminders For Bible Study Teachers and Leaders…**

Why is Christian education important? Because it is where we really learn about the Bible. Why is the Bible important? Because it tells us about Jesus Christ. Why is Jesus Christ important? Because He is the Way, the Truly and the Life. There is no other way for us to be saved than to receive the gift of salvation that he freely offers to us.

As a leader or teacher of any Bible study group, you have the awesome responsibility to tell your students about Jesus Christ, to help lead them to Him, and to help them grow in their knowledge of Him, His Word and His will for their lives. To a great degree, you, as the teacher or leader of the group, are responsible for the “care and feeding” of each of their souls. You are responsible for challenging each student and showing them their need for Jesus. You are responsible for giving students an opportunity to receive Jesus Christ into their hearts and renew their relationship with Him. You are responsible for helping students of all ages learn what’s right and what’s wrong. You are responsible for showing students how much God loves them and for helping them become mirrors of His love to the world around them. You are responsible for helping them develop a strong personal relationship with Jesus Christ – a relationship supported by daily Bible reading and prayer – that will help them apply their faith to all problems, cares and situations that they face in life. Yes, you have a tremendous responsibility! However, you also have a tremendous opportunity.

Teaching or leading a Bible study group is surely one of the greatest works any Christian can undertake. As you allow the Holy Spirit to use your hands, your voice, your mind and your creative abilities, you become a partner in the work of reaching and teaching the world about Jesus Christ. You become one of Jesus’ disciples who have heard his commission to “Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19 & 20a)

Our Lord was once asked, “which is the greatest commandments?” In response, Jesus said, “The most important is this: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second most important commandment is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Matthew 22:36-40) And certainly there can be no better advice for any Bible study teacher or leader than to paraphrase the words of Jesus: “Love the Lord and love your students!” If you truly do that, you will be an outstanding, wildly successful teacher and have a great, successful, focused Bible study group.

**“Survey of Talents and Interests” Sheet…**

How will you select an activity on which to base your “Special Interest Bible Study?” One idea might be to use a ‘Talent and Interest Survey.” “Talent and Interest Surveys” are designed to be used with members of all ages in a church and even into the community. On the next several pages you will find a sample of a “Talent and Interest Survey” that you might use. Please feel free to use this survey in full or in part and to add or make changes in it, as you see necessary. The survey should be typed and copied and then distributed to all of the members of your church and their families (elementary school age and older). Using the results of the survey, you should be able to get a better idea of the areas of interest and the talents that exist within your congregation. These results will, hopefully, also be a help to you as you plan for one or more special interest Bible study groups in your church.

**TALENT & INTEREST SURVEY**

**Instructions:** Our church is trying to determine the many talents and interests of our members and friends. Please help us by completing the personal profile information and then by indicating your degree of interest in each of the areas listed. Please circle one of the sets of letters after each activity to indicate if you are **“NI” (Not Interested, “LI” (a Little Interested) or “GI” (Greatly Interested)** in each. If there are other interests that you have that are not listed, please list at the bottom of the survey sheet. Please use one sheet per person. All persons – elementary school age and older – are asked to fill out a survey form. Thank you.

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Do you attend worship?

\_\_\_often; \_\_\_sometimes; \_\_\_not very often, \_\_\_never

Do you attend Sunday school?

\_\_\_often; \_\_\_sometimes; \_\_\_not very often; \_\_\_never

What Sunday school class are you a member of? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How are involved in the following programs:

- V.B.S.

\_\_\_\_often; \_\_\_sometimes; \_\_\_not very often; \_\_never

- Youth Group

\_\_\_often; \_\_\_sometimes; \_\_\_not very often; \_\_\_never

- Midweek Bible Study

\_\_\_often; \_\_\_sometimes; \_\_\_not very often; \_\_\_never

- Home Bible Study Groups

\_\_\_often; \_\_\_sometimes; \_\_\_not very often; \_\_\_never

Other church activities in which you are involved:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What are you interested in? Please circle one of the sets of letters after each activity to indicate if you are “NI” (Not Interested), “LI” (a Little Interested) or “GI” (Greatly Interested in each.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Gourmet Cooking | NI | LI | GI |
| Healthy Cooking | NI | LI | GI |
| Dieting Group Classes | NI | LI | GI |
| Basics of Cooking | NI | LI | GI |
| Healthy Living | NI | LI | GI |
| Aerobics | NI | LI | GI |
| Exercise (for your age group | NI | LI | GI |
| Parent and Young Child Exercise Group | NI | LI | GI |
| Basic Computer Skills | NI | LI | GI |
| Advanced Computer Skills | NI | LI | GI |
| Using E-mail and the Internet | NI | LI | GI |
| Parenting Skills | NI | LI | GI |
| Preparation For Childbirth Classes | NI | LI | GI |
| New Dads Class | NI | LI | GI |
| New Moms Class | NI | LI | GI |
| Babysitter Training | NI | LI | GI |
| Support Group Programs (Explain: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) | NI | LI | GI |
| Crafts (What crafts are you interested in? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) | NI | LI | GI |
| Nature Studies | NI | LI | GI |
| Music Appreciation | NI | LI | GI |
| Singing in a Church Choir | NI | LI | GI |
| Being part of a Bell Choir | NI | LI | GI |
| Being part of a Church Orchestra or Band. What instruments do you play? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | NI | LI | GI |
| Pets and Pet Care (What pets do you have?) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | NI | LI | GI |
| Journalism | NI | LI | GI |
| Hobbies (What hobbies do you have?) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | NI | LI | GI |
| Being part of a Church or Community Work Team | NI | LI | GI |
| Being part of a Fundraising Group (for missions or community help groups) | NI | LI | GI |
| Being part of a Drama Group | NI | LI | GI |
| Being part of a Puppet Team | NI | LI | GI |
| Being part of a Book Discussion Group | NI | LI | GI |
| Being part of a Movie Discussion Group | NI | LI | GI |
| Being part of a Music Discussion Group | NI | LI | GI |
| Being part of a TV Discussion Group | NI | LI | GI |
| Science | NI | LI | GI |
| Magic | NI | LI | GI |
| Being part of a Sports Discussion Group (What sports are you interested in? | NI | LI | GI |
| Playing Sports (What sports do you like to play?) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | NI | LI | GI |
| Playing Board Games (What board games do you like?)  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | NI | LI | GI |
| Playing Card Games (What games do you like to play?  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | NI | LI | GI |
| Gardening | NI | LI | GI |
| Antiques | NI | LI | GI |
| Weather | NI | LI | GI |
| Travel | NI | LI | GI |
| History | NI | LI | GI |
| Religions of the World | NI | LI | GI |
| Cults | NI | LI | GI |
| Bible History | NI | LI | GI |
| Church & Denominational History | NI | LI | GI |
| People, Places & Things of the Bible | NI | LI | GI |
| Missions Around the World | NI | LI | GI |
| Small Engine Repair | NI | LI | GI |
| Basic Car Care | NI | LI | GI |
| Astronomy | NI | LI | GI |
| Geology | NI | LI | GI |
| Electronics | NI | LI | GI |
| First Aid | NI | LI | GI |
| Video Production | NI | LI | GI |
| Photography | NI | LI | GI |
| Quilting | NI | LI | GI |
| Jewelry Making | NI | LI | GI |
| Needlework | NI | LI | GI |
| Stained Glass | NI | LI | GI |
| Creative Crafts from ‘Junk’ | NI | LI | GI |
| Painting/Drawing | NI | LI | GI |
| Wood Crafts | NI | LI | GI |
| Silk Screen Printing | NI | LI | GI |
| Pottery | NI | LI | GI |
| Ceramics | NI | LI | GI |
| General Arts (Please explain: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_) | NI | LI | GI |
| Being Part of a Church Newsletter Club | NI | LI | GI |
| Model Car/Airplane Building | NI | LI | GI |
| Coin Collecting | NI | LI | GI |
| Stamp Collecting | NI | LI | GI |
| General Collectables (What do you collect?) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | NI | LI | GI |
| NASCAR Collectables | NI | LI | GI |
| Avon Collectables | NI | LI | GI |
| Kite Making & Flying | NI | LI | GI |
| Model Rocketry | NI | LI | GI |
| Sports Car Collecting | NI | LI | GI |
| Postcard Collecting | NI | LI | GI |

What other interests (things not listed) do you have? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Of the large list of possible interests listed above, which TWO or THREE would you say you are most interested in? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***(Include instructions as to what is to be done with completed survey sheets and when they are to be turned in.)***