

3.4 INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Insight from Others

Adult Learning Characteristics – Adult Teacher Resources

A secular organization prepared this article to help trainers in the family education field. The contents explore characteristics of adult learners, and these characteristics apply to learners inside the church, as well as those in secular settings. The article contains sufficient information for several meaningful conversations with your adult teachers. The following provides one approach to exploring this article.

1. Make and distribute copies of the article to each person.
2. Read one section of the article.
3. Possible questions for discussion:
 - a. What experiences from your life illustrate the idea presented in this section?
 - b. How have you experienced this idea or incorporated it into your teaching?
 - c. How could this idea be incorporated or considered as we lead the adult teaching/learning ministry of our church?
4. Encourage each person to write an objective that will include this idea in an upcoming educational setting.

Follow this link to the article, *Teaching Adults: What Every Trainer Needs to Know about Learning Styles* <http://www.fastfamilysupport.org/fasttraining/Other/teachingadults-whattrainersneedtoknow.pdf>

Effective Assimilation Through Sunday School

by [David Francis](#) on Monday, May 03, 2010

"Assimilation" is a term all too common to church leaders. Some churches even employ a "Minister of Assimilation." While the word has a breadth of meanings, in churches it typically describes the process - or identifies the problem - of helping folks who only attend worship move into fellowship and discipleship. Sunday School has a proven track record as an effective assimilation tool.

What could be Simpler?

In the blockbuster book *Simple Church*, authors Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger reported research findings that suggested that one of the reasons 400 "vibrant" Southern Baptist churches (and 100 non-SBC congregations) had shown consistent growth (five percent for three consecutive years) was that they encouraged members to move through a simple, clearly communicated disciple-making process. Along with Geiger, I conducted an analysis of the 400 SBC churches, discovering that 87.5 percent utilized Sunday School - or its functional equivalent by another name - as the second step in their process. The remaining 12.5 percent used off-campus small groups.

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Follow this link to read the entire article:

<http://www.lifeway.com/ArticleView?storeId=10054&catalogId=10001&langId=-1&article=sunday-school-effectvie-assimilation-open-groups-david-francis>

Online Christian Classics

The Christian Classics Ethereal Library (CCEL) seeks to build up the church by making classic Christian literature widely available and promoting its use for edification and study by interested Christians, seekers and scholars. The CCEL accomplishes this by selecting, collecting, distributing, and promoting valuable literature through the World Wide Web and other media. Writings included in the library are considered to have value for building up the church. In addition to Christian classics, there may be secondary literature on the classics and other works valuable for the mission. Also, the collection represents orthodox Christianity as understood by mainstream Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians, with greater emphases on Reformed and Protestant writings.

The CCEL strives to expose readers to a variety of Christian perspectives and provide effective resources and tools for edification, worship, leadership, ministry training, Christian scholarship, and education.

The books in the library are available in a variety of formats and often are available at no charge.

The following list provides a glimpse at the types of authors and books that are available, as well as a brief description of the writings from the website:

St. Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine* – The most popular work of the man who, more than any other, shaped western civilization. The first 10 chapters constitute a spiritual autobiography and some spiritual and philosophical reflections; the last three chapters are a reflection on the creation story of Genesis 1.

John Bunyan, *Pilgrim's Progress – A spiritual allegory*. Of books written in English, one of the all-time most popular. [Audio available.](#)

G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* – Chesterton's writing reminds me of C.S. Lewis, but a little more colorful, a little more quirky. This book is an apology for the Christian world-view.

George Fox, *Autobiography of George Fox* – This is a fascinating journal of the exploits of the founder of the Society of Friends (Quakers). It is also very illuminating about the political and religious state of seventeenth century England – for example, Fox lives through the commonwealth period, meets Cromwell, and prophesies his downfall after he treats Quakers badly. [Audio available.](#)

St. Ignatius of Loyola, *The Spiritual Exercises* – Spiritual exercises arranged into 4 weeks, by the founder of the Jesuits. [Audio available.](#)

St. John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *Dark Night of the Soul* – The writings of St. John of the Cross are unsurpassed for mystical theology. The "dark night" is a must-read for anyone seriously concerned about growing spiritually.

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Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* – In this little collection of letters and reflections, Brother Lawrence encourages us to be continually in God's presence. [Audio available.](#)

The complete collection is available at <http://www.ccel.org/>

Planning for Adult Faith Formation

An article from the Faith Formation Learning Exchange by Pam Coster

In the Gospel of John, Jesus asks the disciples of John the Baptist who have followed him, “What do you want?” (John 1:38). We might ask the same of the adults in our faith communities today, many of whom are unsettled in their faith and searching, yearning for a deeper relationship with God. Vibrant churches provide activities, resources, and a mission driven culture which help adults more fully understand and live their faith. Helping adults grow spiritually, giving them opportunities for renewal, faith sharing, and learning is not only essential for the health of a faith community, it is a work of mercy-giving living waters to those thirsting for God.

This article continues by addressing planning as a resource for helping churches give this living water to those thirsting for God. The article addresses vision, goals, roles, knowing your congregation, and five year and annual plans.

Follow this link to read this entire article

http://www.faithformationlearningexchange.net/uploads/5/2/4/6/5246709/planning_for_adult_faith_formation_-_coster.pdf

The Faith Formation Learning Exchange provides tools to assist congregational leaders, professors and ministry educators, ministry students, authors, publishers, and program developers to respond creatively and adaptively with relevant approaches to faith formation. The website will be updated monthly, so you'll always have access to the most current information. The Learning Exchange is a resource sharing website that is part of Vibrant Faith Ministries. It grew out of the Youth and Family Institute founded by Merton and Irene Strommen.

Preaching for Spiritual Formation

Using the Sermon to Move Individuals toward a Deeper Relationship with the Lord

By Kenneth E. Bickel and Christy M. Hill, Grace Theological Seminary

Spiritual formation seeks to create a context where Christians can experience a deepening relationship with God. The deepening of this relationship depends on knowledge of God and knowledge of self. This paper asserts that sermons can constitute a vital part of creating this context for those individuals who find their spiritual nourishment primarily in a large-gathering worship service. Preaching content, as well as effective forms of communication will be discussed in light of the relational emphasis of spiritual formation.

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This paper is written for the pastor who preaches regularly and for the preacher who houses a pastor's heart. It arises out of a desire to confront several realities that collide, including the following:

- Preachers with a pastor's heart are not satisfied with preaching merely to provide information, or simply to stir emotions, or to use engaging communicative skills to build a larger church. They desire deeply to see their listeners more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ as a result of their preaching.
- Most preachers face the reality that the arena where they can bring the Word of God to the most people at one sitting is the main worship service(s) of the local church.

The following link will take you to the complete article. <http://www.ehomiletics.com/papers/08/Bickel.pdf>

The Thoughtful Christian

This resource is an online marketplace and offers books and downloadable resources that are perfect for Sunday school classes, Bible study groups, or individual reflection. The user downloads the desired study, makes the necessary copies to use in the group and is ready to prepare and present the session. There is a small fee for the resources, although some are available at no charge.

Since they began in January of 2006, new studies have been posted each week for an expanding variety of audiences in the church. Studies for adults were soon followed by studies for high school youth, studies for parents, Spanish-language studies, and then retreat designs. Advent, Lent, and topical study packs have been released each year. Currently there are over 500 studies on the site. Last year they upgraded the site and added selling books at 25-75% discounts.

The Thoughtful Christian is maintained by Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, the publishing house of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.); however, The Thoughtful Christian is an ecumenical site with writers from a variety of denominational affiliations and experiential backgrounds. Their goal is to help Christians from a wide variety of perspectives find resources to help them understand, share, and practice their faith.

Check out The Thoughtful Christian at <http://www.thethoughtfulchristian.com/New%20Site/main/Home.asp>

What is BuildingChurchLeaders.com?

More than 75,000 church leaders trust BuildingChurchLeaders.com to keep them equipped, effective, and energized. This is a ministry of the Leadership Journal.

You'll find more than 250 free articles on the site, helping you and your team stay informed of topics that affect the church. Church leaders like you, who have found help or inspiration and want to share it, write these articles. The site also features some of the most influential and respected church leaders today, such as Bill Hybels and Jack Hayford, as well as the trusted editors of Leadership journal.

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The downloadable, easy-to-use Training Tools provide everything you need to prepare a relevant training session in a matter of minutes. You select the topical tool that fits what you want to accomplish, download it, make copies if needed, and lead a discussion with your team. Many authors may contribute to one downloadable tool, including such influential voices as John Ortberg, Gordon MacDonald, Naomi Gaede-Penner, Rick Warren, Angie Ward, and others. A fee is charged for downloading resources, although free samples are also available.

The resource for training adult teachers can be found at

<http://www.buildingchurchleaders.com/downloads/orientationguides/adultsundayschoolteacher/>

Or check out this resource for organizing your Adult Education ministry

<http://www.buildingchurchleaders.com/downloads/bestchurchpractices/adulteducation/>

Worship and Education for All

By Stephen Chapin Garner and Jerry Thornell

Over the past decade, worship attendance, annual giving, and participation in Christian education have doubled at the United Church of Christ in Norwell, Massachusetts. We have learned that tending to growth requires tending to worship and education for all ages. Arguably the most significant shift in our congregation has been our emphasis on education and worship for all. Like many mainline Protestant churches in our country, worship and church school for children were held at the same time. Parents and other adults worshiped upstairs while children attended church school downstairs. The children were invited to join in worship when there was a children's message, or when it was Youth Sunday. Even on the surface of this arrangement we recognized numerous flaws.

A cursory examination of our educational program revealed that there were glaring issues, but what slowly came into greater focus was the implicit and unacceptable message we were giving to the members and friends of our congregation. Having adults worshiping God at the same time that our children were in church school communicated that Christian education for adults was not important and that having children participate in worship was not important. We had not intended to send such a careless message, but our church tradition and convention was communicating just that—children needed only education, and grown-ups needed only worship.

Once we realized the unhealthy faith dynamic we were sustaining, we knew it had to change if we were going to grow in faith as a community.

Follow this link to read the entire article <http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=9894>. The article was distributed in the Alban Institute electronic newsletter and was excerpted from the book *Scattering Seeds: Cultivating Church Vitality* by Stephen Chapin Garner with Jerry Thornell, copyright © 2012 by the Alban Institute.