



Faith Pulpit

The Christian Education Committee in a Local Church

A church's Christian education program is a large part of its overall ministry. It involves more people and more programs than any other part of a church's life. How can a pastor effectively organize and coordinate the different parts of the Christian education program? By utilizing a Christian Education Committee. In this issue of Faith Pulpit Don Anderson, professor of Christian Education at Faith Baptist Bible College, explains the value and function of the Christian Education Committee.

Christian education is an important part of a church's ministry. Our Lord included it as an integral part of the Great Commission. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19, 20).

The early church made Bible teaching part of its core ministries. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine [teaching] and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). "And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42).

Paul carried on an active teaching ministry. "For a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people" (Acts 11:26). "And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:11).

Teaching is one of the spiritual gifts given to people in the church (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28). One of the qualifications of a pastor is that he must be "able to teach" (1 Tim. 3:2). Paul instructed Timothy to take what others had taught him and "commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). The New Testament clearly portrays the important role of Christian education in a local church.

Christian Education Ministries in a Church

Usually a church has several Christian education ministries. Almost every church conducts a Sunday School. Many churches also add children's church, VBS, youth ministries, weekday clubs, and small group Bible studies. Each ministry is important and provides a needed component for the church's total Christian education program.

However, many churches lack a coordinated approach to their Christian education ministries. Each program seems to operate on its own without any attempt to coordinate with the others. As effective as the individual programs might be, they can be more effective if the programs work together. A solution to this problem is to establish a Christian Education Committee to coordinate the Bible teaching programs.

Benefits of Coordination

A church that actively seeks to coordinate its Christian education ministries will

- make better use of its volunteer workers;
- avoid schedule conflicts;
- provide a stronger, more effective, more unified teaching program;
- better utilize the financial resources;
- avoid overlaps and omissions in the content of the programs;
- help the workers feel they are part of a larger ministry; and
- help each ministry fulfill its special role in the church program.

The Purpose of Each Christian Education Ministry

Before examining how to coordinate the different teaching ministries, first consider the purpose of Christian education and the special role each program plays in accomplishing that purpose.

Understanding these concepts will help achieve greater coordination.

Overall Purpose—According to Matthew 28:19 and 20, the overall purpose of a church is to “make disciples of all the nations.” This process of discipleship involves leading people to Christ and helping them mature in their Christian lives. Since Christian education is part of the church program, its purpose likewise is discipleship.

Specific Roles—Each program has a specific role to play in accomplishing the purpose of discipleship.

- Sunday School-intensive, systematic, age-graded Bible teaching focusing on evangelism, discipleship, assimilation, and service
- Children's Church-worship and instruction on a child's level and preparation for a lifetime of worship
- Youth Ministries-further spiritual training with an emphasis on development of godly habits, formation of a Christian worldview, and preparation for church leadership
- Weekday Clubs-outreach into the community and further spiritual training emphasizing basic Bible truths, Scripture memorization, and life application
- Vacation Bible School-concentrated Bible teaching with strong evangelistic outreach and spiritual training for Christians
- Small Group Bible Studies-further Bible teaching focused on the individuals' needs or social groupings

The Priority of the Sunday School—All of these programs are useful, but a church needs to recognize the importance of the Sunday School. It is the strongest and most comprehensive Bible teaching program because it

- provides a class for every age;
- meets every Sunday of the year; and
- covers the entire Bible.

No other ministry brings together all of these advantages. For this reason the Sunday School should be given the central role in a church's Christian education program.

Procedure for Coordination

The following procedure will help a church coordinate its Christian education programs and achieve the maximum benefits from its effort.

- 1. Select a Christian Education Committee.** This committee could be composed of the leaders of the individual Christian education ministries and the pastoral staff. Some churches may want to include a deacon on the committee to provide oversight and accountability.
- 2. Choose an individual to lead the committee.** If a church has a Christian Education director on staff or delegates that role to an assistant pastor, that person should lead the committee. When there is no such staff person, the pastor or one of the ministry leaders can chair the group. The chairman leads the meetings and assists the ministry leaders with their work.

3. Plan quarterly meetings. Because of the nature and scope of the committee's work, it may need to meet for 1½ to 2 hours each quarter. The committee can determine the best time to meet. This group may find it beneficial to meet just prior to the quarterly Sunday School teachers meetings so that any decisions or information can be communicated to the Sunday School staff. In the meetings give attention to the ten areas of coordination described below.

4. Report to the deacons. After each committee meeting, the chairman of the Christian Education Committee should report to the deacons. This arrangement provides further accountability for the committee and raises the level of importance of the committee's work.

Areas of Coordination

The following ten areas of coordination can provide the agenda for each meeting. The committee chairman may want to address each area, allow each member to give input from his or her ministry, and then lead the group in making plans to coordinate that area of concern. Some of the areas will simply require discussion and agreement among the members. When the committee needs to take some action, the chairman should make sure that a person is assigned the responsibility and that a timeline is set up for completion. The chairman should work with the individuals to be sure they complete the assignments.

1. Purpose-At least once a year, consider the general purpose of the church (to help believers mature in their Christian lives) and how each Christian education ministry helps to accomplish that purpose. (See the specific roles listed above.) Discuss any adjustments that the ministries may need to make to fulfill their roles.

2. Curriculum-Once a year, probably at the summer meeting, focus on the curriculum resources each program will use. The goal is to provide a thorough, balanced, age-appropriate curriculum for each ministry. Many churches use Regular Baptist Press curriculum resources because they are written from a fundamental, Baptist, dispensational position and teach "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). The committee may want to identify the curriculum studies for each program for the entire year to get a sense of the scope and sequence of the church's Bible teaching for the year.

3. Personnel-Once a year, again probably in the summer, discuss the personnel needs for each ministry. The goal is to involve as many qualified church members as possible and to avoid asking people to serve in more than one major role in the church educational program. Think through all the personnel needs for the year and together develop a list of people each ministry leader will contact for his or her program. Make sure all of the people to be contacted meet your church's worker standards. If the church does not have worker standards in place, it should formulate them before any leader contacts a potential worker. This committee should consider personnel needs at every meeting since needs change and people's situations change during the year. This committee should also organize and

administer the child protection policies for all the church ministries.

4. Finances-Prior to the beginning of each fiscal year, the committee should meet to compile a budget for each of the programs. The goal is to consider the needs of each ministry and submit a budget figure to the pastor and deacons for the entire Christian education program. During the year the committee should examine the spending of each program to be sure it is in line with the budgeted funds.

5. Scheduling-Once a year, probably in the summer meeting, the committee should develop a master calendar showing all of the expected events and activities for the year. The goal is to plan the entire year so as to avoid schedule conflicts during the year. Each quarter the committee should look at the upcoming calendar events to be sure no conflicts have arisen.

6. Training-The committee should provide training for the workers in each program. The goal is to arrange initial training for new workers as well as ongoing training for all the workers. The members can discuss what kinds of training are needed and when to schedule the training.

7. Facilities and Equipment-The committee should oversee the facilities and equipment needs for all the ministries with a goal of providing up-to-date facilities and all the necessary equipment. If a ministry needs to replace equipment or purchase additional items, the committee should include that amount in the budget proposal.

8. Promotion and Publicity-Each Bible teaching program needs to be publicized both inside and outside the church. The goal of the committee is to discuss effective means of promotion and schedule the promotional times for the year. It should also include in the yearly budget request the funds needed for promotion.

9. Evangelism and Follow-Up-Some ministries, such as Vacation Bible School and weekday clubs, are more evangelistic in nature, but all Bible teaching ministries should involve evangelism. The goal is to regularly examine the outreach efforts of the programs and plan creative way of evangelism through the programs. Evangelism and outreach bring with them the responsibility for follow-up. This committee then should develop a unified plan for following up visitors and new believers.

10. Evaluation-Evaluation is an essential part of successful ministries. Once a year this committee should conduct a thorough evaluation of all the Christian education programs. The goal is to identify areas of weakness and take steps to make improvements in those areas.

If your church currently has a Christian Education Committee, endeavor to make it as useful and functional as possible. If your church does not have this committee, take the steps to initiate one. The Christian Education Committee requires time and effort, but the result will be a stronger, more unified, more effective Christian education program.

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