

A LEADERSHIP MEETING? *You've Got to Be Kidding!*

BY OMAR C. GARCIA

I was the newest and youngest member of our church's ministry staff and had been assigned the responsibility of leading the adult leadership meeting. Intimidated does not begin to describe how I felt. I was certain that some of those present had proofread the Pentateuch before Moses completed it! I took a deep breath and then opened the meeting with prayer. That was twenty-four years and over one thousand leadership meetings ago.

My life has been enriched as a result of the many hours spent with those who guide others in the study of God's Word every week. I benefit from the friendship, prayers, encouragement, and insight of the many teachers I have met with on a regular basis over the years. I have also enjoyed the discipline of studying every week in order to guide and encourage those who teach others. The leadership meeting can be an excellent vehicle for helping teachers prepare to guide others in Bible study and to help them build and maintain healthy classes.

Prayer

Leadership meetings provide an opportunity for adult leaders to pray with one another on a regular basis.

Prayer is essential for those who guide others in the study of God's Word. No teacher should stand before others without first having knelt before God in prayer—looking to Him for guidance and insight into His Word (Ps. 119:18).

Leadership meetings also provide a regular opportunity

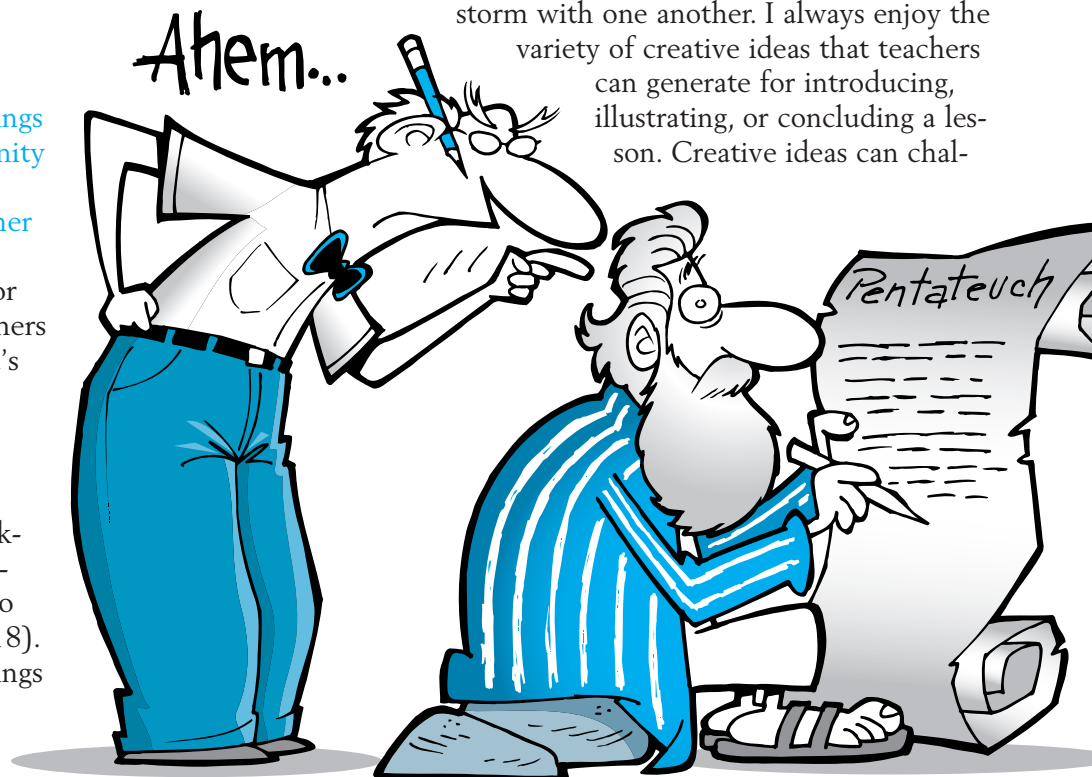
for teachers to pray for one another. Teachers are real people living in the real world dealing with real pressures and problems.

Ministry

Leadership meetings allow the total class leadership team to collectively develop ministry strategies and plans. Leadership meetings are not merely a time to prepare for leading a Bible study session. These meetings prepare class leaders for strategic ministry including building relationships and keeping classes focused on their mission.

Inspiration

Leadership meetings can be a breeding ground for great ideas. Those who teach week after week know the challenges (and frustrations) of finding ways to stimulate interest in a lesson or of discovering how to challenge learners to apply a particular lesson. Leadership meetings provide a vehicle for teachers to brainstorm with one another. I always enjoy the variety of creative ideas that teachers can generate for introducing, illustrating, or concluding a lesson. Creative ideas can chal-



lence teachers to venture out of the lecture zone and to involve learners in ways that can help them to better understand and apply God's Word.

Preparation

Leadership meetings provide teachers with the opportunity to overview the coming week's lesson. Bible study should be about more than discussing "what this verse means to me." Bible study should be about discovering "what this verse means to God." Paul admonished Timothy to rightly divide the Word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). To "rightly divide"—an expression from Paul's tent making experience—means, "to cut straight." In Paul's day, large tents were made of many small animal hides sewn together. If one piece of animal hide was not cut straight then the other pieces would not fit together properly. Teachers should make certain that they cut the Scripture straight so that individual passages under consideration fit together properly into their larger context of applying God's truths to their lives.

Evaluation

Leadership meetings provide a safe environment for teachers to celebrate their successes and to evaluate their failures. Celebration can encourage teachers to try new and creative approaches to teaching. Evaluation can caution teachers to pray, plan, and to execute more intentionally. I can easily recall many times when teachers shared about the things that made the previous week's lesson a hit or a miss. Teachers who aspire to become better teachers can learn valuable lessons from one another's successes and failures.

Innovation

Computers and the Internet now make it possible for teachers to access a variety of lesson preparation helps. LifeWay Extra, available at www.lifeway.com/myextra, is an excellent resource for up-to-the-minute illustrations and teaching suggestions. These teaching helps are posted well-enough in advance to be available for use in leadership meetings. Also, the compact disc included in various Leader Packs (teaching resource kits) contains all kinds of useful resources and tools. In addition to these helps, I post my weekly Bible teaching notes at www.BibleTeachingNotes.com. Teachers unable to

attend a leadership meeting can access any of this information at their convenience.

Information

Leadership meetings are an excellent vehicle for providing teachers with regular in-service training. A few minutes of each meeting can be set aside to review various issues that impact the health of a class—such as prayer concerns, how to create a warm and friendly environment, or follow-up considerations. This time can also be used to communicate with teachers about churchwide events and ways in which classes can support those events.

Continuation

Leadership meetings provide a regular opportunity for encouraging involvement in events and activities that touch those beyond the walls of the church building. I encourage each of our departments and classes to adopt activities that involve members in demonstrating God's love to our community through practical acts of kindness. I also encourage them to support our church's international missions ministry by adopting one of our unreached people groups. Many teachers and class members have traveled with me over the years to work among some of the world's least reached people groups. Our local and international involvement adds a very exciting dimension to what we do at home every week.

Dedication

Leadership meetings serve as a reminder that we cannot be casual or careless in our preparation to guide others in Bible study. Intentionally studying and preparing with others can help teachers to better anticipate questions, glean practical truths, employ creative teaching methods, stay on task, and make the most of the time on Sunday mornings. Consider that in a year of perfect Sunday School attendance to a class that devotes at least one full hour to Bible study, a person will have studied the Bible 52 out of 8760 hours. Most people devote more time to other interests and distractions in a single week! That is why teachers must be the very best stewards of the Sunday morning Bible teaching hour.

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