

Chapter 3

STUDYING THE GAME:

Organization

A number of years ago our family vacationed in Vermont. The main reason for the trip that summer was to visit some good friends who were working there. Jack was the manager of the Vermont Reds, the AA team of the Cincinnati organization. During the day we played tennis, swam and hiked. Each evening we traveled to the ballpark to cheer the team.

Whether it's Little League or the Major League, basic fundamentals of the game never change. Each inning consists of six outs; three outs per team. The pitcher is the one who puts the ball in play. If the batter hits the ball, it must be caught in the air or thrown to a base to force the runner out.

The game of baseball is a composite of pitching, catching, fielding, throwing and batting. When all the elements come together well for a team, the result is usually a deserved victory.

As we look at the Christian education program in a local church, we also see a composite of activities that, when played well, produce an effective outcome. When the components of Sunday School, youth groups, club programs and Bible studies are effective, then the discipleship program will produce knowledge and maturity in Christ Jesus.

How do we develop a quality Christian Education program?

The church's discipleship program seeks to teach and develop people into Christ likeness. To accomplish the purpose of "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded" (Jesus speaking in Matthew 28:20), each congregation will use a variety of means to fulfill the commission.

Building quality into any program first begins with *attitude*. Quality rises when leaders believe that they are involved in the most important task in the world. The Sunday School is not another program like Indian Guides, Girl Scouts or the 4-H Club. While Little League and piano lessons are important, the most important activity during a week are those times when we learn more about God. A high view of our task will produce a high quality in the task.

The quality of the program is also directly related to the *leadership and teaching staff* within the program. The type of people we recruit, the effectiveness of training, the ongoing communication and appreciation that is given, all contribute to the quality of our program. The development of staff is developed more fully in Chapter 5, "Making the Team a Winner."

The *amount of programming* that a church attempts can also affect the quality of its ministry. While it is important to offer diversity and balance, attempting more program than is staffable hurts the overall quality of ministry. Starting only one new program at a time can assure proper supervision and assessment of that program, and how it relates to the overall discipleship program.

Solid organization, trained staff and even a good learning environment (facilities), all have bearing on the quality of the Christian Education program. A quality program keeps regular attendees interested, which is also a significant ingredient for outreach and growth.

How much program should we offer?

Many pastors feel that their churches need to be a "full service church." When people look for a new congregation, it is common to desire one that has specialized ministries for specific ages. To respond to this concern, some churches have attempted to offer more program than they can effectively staff.

The composition of a congregation should inform the selection of its ministries. Programs are only a means to an end. A new ministry that targets senior citizens, junior highs or deaf people can only be successful if it has a sufficient base of people in those populations. Therefore, a study of the community and of the congregation's sub-populations should precede any attempt at programming.

The number of available volunteers also influences the size of a church's discipleship program. The educational ministry of a congregation is just one of many programs within the church. The congregation that also has large worship, outreach and small group ministries, can find itself competing for human resources. A church cannot maintain more program than it can staff, so its leaders must cooperate in overall program development.

In many churches the Sunday School is declining. Why is this?

While some churches are experiencing Sunday School decline, this is not a universal situation. In fact, many churches have dynamic learning programs that are thriving. Nevertheless, a number of factors can adversely impact program participation:

- A growing number of people “committed” to the church are traveling more on weekends, engaging in leisure activities, and or simply “cocooning” after an exhausting week. The combined effect of this intermittent attendance is a lower percentage of the congregation present on any given Sunday.
- Sports and community activities for children and youth are increasingly being scheduled on Sundays.
- A maturing population. Many congregations have not been successful in reaching young adults. Churches that do not have this population, with their respective children and youth, will have difficulty building attendance.
- A change in the purpose of the Sunday School. A number of years ago evangelism and education were the two main reasons for having a Sunday School. Many schools today have education and fellowship as their main purposes. While fellowship is essential, a de-emphasis of outreach will show corresponding de-emphasis in attendance.
- The development of full service churches. Many churches have provided additional programs for young people and a diversity of programs for adults. Many adults would prefer to attend a two-hour Thursday evening home Bible study than the fifty-minute Sunday School. The home Bible study is usually in a more relaxed atmosphere and offers an opportunity for questions and personal interaction. The Sunday School may be larger, more structured and less personal. It is not that one program is better than another; it’s the simple fact that where students have several programs from which to choose, all of the programs do not maintain the same height of interest.

How can we build a healthy Sunday School?

Why is it that many fans support a professional team one year, yet do not attend the next season? Why are the ballparks of some teams packed out, while other stadiums are empty? There is a direct correlation between what is happening on the field and the number of fans in the bleachers. People enjoy a winning team and avoid a losing team. A healthy team wins. It accomplishes its purpose.

A healthy Sunday School is one that is accomplishing its designed purposes. Most Sunday Schools have a primary focus on teaching the Scriptures, and a healthy Sunday School is one in which the teaching-learning process is being consistently accomplished. If fellowship is part of the Sunday School’s purpose, then a healthy Sunday School is one which provides for community. If outreach is part of the function of a church’s Bible school, then it is healthy if it is seeing additions through its outreach efforts.

A healthy Sunday School needs a balance in curriculum, competent teachers that enjoy people and a learning atmosphere that facilitates spiritual growth.

To build health into a Sunday School, both *attitudes* and *behaviors* need monitoring. Leaders and teachers can flourish with positive attitudes and a joyful understanding of their teaching privilege. This inner attitude helps generate better teaching. Equally important, leaders and teachers need to focus on behaviors that encourage learning. As a teacher practices good teaching methods, his or her attitude will also improve. As the staff develops healthy attitudes and healthy teaching behaviors, those who attend the Sunday School will pick up on this positive influence, and the Sunday School as a whole will grow in quality.

Should children participate in congregational worship, or be in their own program during the morning service?

A children's church is usually a program for preschoolers and/or elementary age children that provides a worship experience at the child's own level. Many churches conduct the program during the worship service.

Some leaders question the relative value of first graders sitting through a typical worship service, compared to their participation in a program designed especially for them. They believe that both children and parents worship and learn best when they are in their own services.

Other leaders are opposed to separating children from parents during worship. "Worship is caught as well as taught," they argue, and therefore the modeling of older brothers and sisters, friends and parents in a worship service is important. Furthermore, they actually believe that there is a danger in keeping children totally separated from the adult worship until they reach the youth years. It is during the junior high years that young people are testing their own autonomy on their parents, and may not even want to go to church. If they have rarely been in adult worship until these years, the transition may be very difficult for them, and subsequently an additional point of family conflict.

It is beneficial for children to participate in adult worship, yet it is also advantageous for them to have a program at their own conceptual level. To accomplish both of these goals, some churches have what is called a *release time* feature of their worship service. For example, families may sit together in worship for the first thirty minutes of the service (thus allowing the children to share in the season of praise, Scripture readings and special music), then just prior to the message the children are released for a thirty-minute program tailored to their learning level.

The release time emphasis has some drawbacks (for example, using sanctuary seating for only half of the service can be a problem in crowded worship services). Nevertheless, some churches believe that this format is better than other options.

Children's churches are primarily beneficial for children in grades one through four, although some churches extend it through grade six. If a release time schedule is followed, or if the children's church does not meet during the summer months, children still have opportunities for community worship.

Is a mid-week program important for our church?

The Scripture tells us not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together, but we are not told how often we should meet. We read the imperatives to gather for worship,

study and fellowship, but we are left to choose how often to meet and what forms our scheduled meetings should take.

The pace and values of today's culture make it difficult to maintain regular fellowship with other believers. A sense of camaraderie in Christ is impossible if we only meet on Sundays. Adults need additional fellowship during the week, and children and youth (who are under heavy peer pressure) also need more frequent contact with godly influences.

Some churches begin their midweek service with a meal, then programming with a nursery for young children, club programs for children, youth studies for teens and electives or a centralized meeting for adults. Other congregations prefer to offer a program for children immediately after school, with studies for youth and adults during the evening.

Whether the additional connecting takes place at the church through kids' clubs and classes, or off-campus through decentralized study groups, all ages benefit from a midweek opportunity for community.

Where does music fit into the Christian education program?

Music is an excellent vehicle for accomplishing many of the purposes of the church. For example, we can worship through music, teach and learn through music, fellowship with music and even present evangelistic messages through the medium of music. Repetitious and catchy tunes can cover everything from theology to Christian living.

Music can be used effectively in the Christian education program for teaching Bible truths. It also provides a way for gifted adults to use their God-wiring to touch children. Music even provides a vehicle for kids to minister to the congregation, or to reach out to the residents of a nursing home.

If a church has a graded music ministry, this medium would take a lower profile in the Christian education program. Where there are not several choirs or bands for children and youth, the educational programs should incorporate music as key learning method.

Many T.V. commercials are easily memorized because they are repetitive and because they utilize a catchy melody. Examples from our culture, but more importantly examples from the Scripture, illustrate the impact of music in shaping values.

How much autonomy should be given to Bible studies? How accountable should they be to the church?

Those who affirm the doctrine of the priesthood of believers recognize that any group of two, five or eight believers has freedom to gather for prayer and study. When home Bible studies exist in a congregation, their relationship to the church is best defined.

Many congregations begin a small group ministry to accomplish specific purposes. They launch study groups to focus on particular subjects, support groups to connect a particular group together and service groups to accomplish particular tasks. If

the church leadership births the small groups, then the church will typically assume the right of supervision over the groups (usually delegated to the facilitators).

If on the other hand a group is formed by a few people on their own initiative, then the church's leadership cannot expect to have authority over the group. However, neither should group members expect church to promote the group or find its leaders.

Accountability for small groups is maintained by keeping up-to-date on the progress on the groups. Each small group leader should have as his/her resource a knowledgeable coach. Coaches can supervise up to five facilitators. By meeting once or twice a month, coaches can encourage their leaders and provide training for them, as well as keep before them the vision of the church and their particular ministry.

Small communities are essential to the life and growth of a church. A sound vision, clear direction and nurturing supervision will fuel the community life of a congregation.

To date our church has only formed coed small groups. What are the advantages of men's groups and women's groups?

My observation of Bible studies in various congregations has led me to conclude that both mixed groups and men's or women's groups help a church accomplish its purposes.

Mixed groups definitely have a place in the cell group ministry of a church. A couples Bible study, for example, provides a regular time for moms and dads to grow spiritually and relationally. In many cases the couples will prepare their lessons together, and this encourages additional shared time. While mixed groups may form more slowly, there are many rewards to men and women studying the Scriptures together. The different viewpoints often generate new and deeper insights into Scripture.

Same sex groups are also important to a congregation. Spiritual growth and community usually takes place more quickly in a homogeneous group. Some men are more uncomfortable answering questions or praying aloud in a mixed group, than they are in a small group of men. Women sometimes sense the same freedom when they are able to share their concerns in an all women's group.

Men's and women's groups have also found that they can reach out evangelistically with greater ease. Some men may respond to an invitation to an early morning or noon Bible study. Some women may be open to a Thursday morning mother's group or an evening study. Many unchurched individuals are more willing to study the Bible or a topic with a few friends, than to risk attending the larger and more unfamiliar church service.

Do you prefer homogeneity or diversity in the composition of groups?

The easy answer is both. What was said above regarding same sex and coed groups applies to the issue of life situations. There is a time for people to be with people like themselves, who are all going through similar experiences. However, there is also a benefit for people to be with people not like them, to know the beauty of a broader perspective.

Whether we're talking of men's groups, women's groups or mixed groups, there are advantages to having diversity within the group. Since the body of Christ has many members, yet one body, so, too a good group is comprised of both mature Christians and newer Christians. Mixed groups enjoy the participation of young adults, middle adults and older adults. Singles are likewise welcomed.

Single adults need mixed fellowship. If they have children, their children need contact with good opposite sex role models. The younger Christian needs the role modeling of more mature Christians. Younger couples need the fellowship of godly older couples. Diversity within small groups not only prevents cliques, but it also opens our eyes to the larger family of God.

A group that has marrieds and singles, men and women and older and younger is appreciated by the participants. Many folks today live away from family or are always with people at the same job or in a similar life-stage. These new friends are grateful for the opportunity to connect with the larger church community.

Our Vacation Bible School does not seem to have any long term results as far as assimilating neighborhood kids into our church. Do you have any suggestions?

It is not unusual for churches to follow up their VBS students with phone calls or letters, simply to find only a few returning to the church. We are glad for the summer ministries that involve neighborhood children, but we also desire to minister to these families on a long term basis.

Usually the Vacation Bible School follow-up is from the teacher or pastor to the child. This may be the least fruitful type of follow-up. A better arrangement for follow-up is to first have the teacher or leader personally contact the adults in the family to let them know that you appreciated having their children in the school. A cordial invitation to a kids' club or the Sunday School can follow. Second, VBS students and their parents who normally attend church should reach out to the children. Peers can more easily recruit their friends.

More specifically, the class teacher can visit each home subsequent to the VBS with a brochure of the church and a description of the church's ministries. Not only can they share with the parents what is available for their child, but they can also mention church programs or resources that would be attractive to the adult. A letter to the entire family would be beneficial only if this personal, visible contact were first made.

Some churches have a fall kick-off, rally Sunday or guest day. This vehicle provides a great opportunity for the church children involved in summer ministries to invite their unchurched friends to church.

Sadly, even if we assimilate some new children into our other programs, their long term affiliation with the church often proves unsuccessful if the modeling of their parents contradicts what's being taught at church. The contacts made with children through summer ministries should lead us to a personal ministry to the entire family. Cordial persistence with parents will let them know that we are sincere in our desire to have our church be a spiritual resource for their entire family.

Some churches in our area have switched to an evening Bible school. What are the advantages and disadvantages to this VBS approach?

Numerically speaking, evening schools may not pull as many neighborhood children as a traditional daytime school. If you are seeking a large group of non-church, neighborhood kids to participate in the VBS, the daytime VBS or back yard Bible clubs will attract more students.

There are many advantages of an evening school, however, that may make this form of training worth trying. There are two major advantages.

First, people who work on day shifts are available to teach in the evening schools. For example, having men teach models that Christ is also for boys, helps maintain discipline and models a healthy relationship between a caring couple. Students coming from single parent homes benefit from opposite sex role models, as well as seeing a couple working in harmony together.

Secondly, an evening Vacation Bible School can also offer adult classes. Neighborhood children are not our only mission field. The whole family is our concern. Adult electives on money management, divorce recovery, God's helps for human hurts, and so on, along with interactive DVDs, can speak to any of the needs faced by the families in our communities.

What are some other good summer ministries?

In addition to a Vacation Bible School, or as an alternative to it, some churches run summer *day clubs*. For example, a club might meet every Thursday from 9 till noon for ten weeks. Older children might meet from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The younger clubs engage in the normal activities of a VBS, and the older clubs then use the extended sessions for trips and recreation.

For curriculum many day clubs use a publishing house's Vacation Bible School materials. For instance, a ten day manual is used one lesson per week. This approach maintains continuity with children throughout the summer, allows the whole summer for follow-up, and usually does not exhaust workers as in a typical VBS.

Some churches also schedule a Bible study, craft, outreach or mother's-day-out for women during the same hours of the club. Here, again, the teaching emphasis of the church moves beyond the child to also include the parents.

Increasingly, many churches have added *day camps* to their summer children's ministries. Soccer camps, tennis camps, water camps, drama camps and computer camps are just a few of the many types of camps offered. Typically, these camps are run on an enrollment, fee for service, basis. The fees cover the salaries of the varsity athletes who run the camps. These skill-building camps also include times for devotion and Christian growth.

Many congregations have further extended their outreach by encouraging members to host *Good News clubs* or *back yard Bible clubs*. These clubs tend to be more evangelistic in nature, and more personal in their approach. The decentralized nature of this ministry allows a congregation to reach beyond the location of their campus, into the diversified neighborhoods of their people.

What is the place of retreats and camps in the church program?

Retreats and camps have a very significant place in church ministry. They can be designed to meet all the purposes of the church: worship, education, fellowship and even evangelism. When teens and adults are removed from the distractions of their own local environments, they are able to think more seriously about spiritual things. Because of the intensity and time involved in a weekend retreat or week-long camp, the student can learn through the modeling of other students as well as the leaders. Many decisions for Christ and recommitments to the Lord have taken place at retreats and camps.

The cost of camp varies. A week of camping may be difficult financially for families with many children. Since the experience is enriching to the child and supportive of the in-house programs of the church, the church should encourage and assist as many as possible to share in this learning opportunity.

Several have suggested we begin a puppet ministry. What will this involve?

Puppets are vehicles of communication. Puppets can teach Bible truths; they can lead in music, and they can also offer students an opportunity to minister to others in the Body of Christ. They can be used by a youth group to minister in nursing homes, orphanages, prisons and children's centers. Puppets can be humorous and also serious. They can present an entire program, or just a part of a program, where the preaching theme is illustrated through the puppet sketch.

The cost of a puppet ministry can vary greatly. One church may choose to buy professional puppets, lighting, scripts and dialogues, whereas another church may choose to make their own puppets and equipment. For those who choose to make their own puppets, a local library usually has pattern books for puppet design.

An attractive stage is possible by using two-inch plastic piping for the frame and homemade curtains for the coverings. The pipes are light, fit snugly into each other, and the curtain utilize Velcro for attaching the fabric to the bars. Set-up, take-down and storage are simple with this type of equipment.

Children and adults alike are fascinated by the ministry of puppets. Puppets can communicate feelings, techniques of witnessing, how to pray, Bible characters and desirable attitudes and behaviors. One church even presented its entire new budget with the puppets. Are puppets effective? In the church that used puppets to present their new fiscal year, it was the first time the new budget was adopted unanimously!

How can we get and keep youth involved in our program?

We have heard the expression—"people scratch where they itch." Any ministry that is going to engage people must be personally meaningful to them. Principles of growth and quality programming do not change when applied to adolescents. While there is uniqueness to each age group, the principles of program health remain the same.

Youth ministry is difficult for some leaders because they fail to realize that teenagers are both children and adults. As children, the adults who work with them need to give them both high support and loving control. We cannot expect the young people to run their own programs, but neither should we try to run the programs for them.

Responsibility must be shared in a cooperative way between the youth sponsors and key teenagers in the youth group. This is what mentoring is all about.

Forms of youth programs vary. Some churches build their youth ministry around an outreach night which includes games and special music. Some groups utilize creative programming and after-church fellowships. For others, the Sunday School is the primary time for instruction and fellowship, with other activities serving to supplement the Sunday morning hour. Other youth groups thrive on puppet ministries, sports, or outreach projects which pull their young people together in united service.

Since students differ we must be careful not to focus the entire youth ministry on one particular emphasis. A praise band, puppet ministry or drama team can be good ministries, yet they can also become divisive. In the same way, a youth ministry that relies on sports might also scare off kids who are not athletic by nature. A large group meeting, small group studies and a good balance of special events (social and service) are all a part of a diversified program that can interest students.

The bottom line for any participant in a ministry is:

1. Does it interest me?
2. Do I feel welcomed and accepted at the activities?
3. Does someone show personal interest in me?
4. Do I feel comfortable in inviting my friends to this program?

Students themselves are essential to meeting these needs. Sensitive, energetic youth leaders are also crucial in producing the above type of program. There are many materials written for youth ministry, and a number of good youth seminars available. Carefully selected, trained leaders can use these resources to run a program that keeps teens engaged.

God has provided everything each local congregation needs to effectively minister to its own people. Even the church at Corinth, with all its problems, had all the spiritual gifts. Every church has the human resources it needs to lead a sound youth ministry. Our responsibility is to encourage some of these gifted people to make student ministries their arena of service. We must then train them and continually support them in their service to our teens. The quality of our adult and student leaders will be the difference between a mediocre youth group and a dynamic youth ministry.

Our church is small and our youth group is small. How can we best minister to our young people?

The dynamics of any group change with size. The types of activities selected for ministry must therefore take into consideration the nature of the group, including its size.

There are disadvantages to a smaller group, but there are also many advantages. In a smaller group young people can develop closeness together as they travel in a van, minister at a shelter, attend an interdenominational rally or meet together in a home. Flexibility in programming is also easier for the smaller youth group. An evening in the pastor's home for banana splits is more feasible with a smaller group, whereas that type of activity in a large church would take considerably more energy.

When a youth group is small the leadership should consider joint ventures and special activities. A Friday movie night once a month with other churches, an all-city

church volleyball tournament, a monthly bowling event or a week at youth camp will allow young people to mix with students on a larger group basis.

Small groups will always remain small if the youth are cliquish, and if all the activities are planned with only the Christians in mind. The best way to grow the youth group is to design the activities to be guest-friendly. If solid answers to life are present in a nonthreatening atmosphere, students are more likely to invite their friends.

Youth leaders who work with these students can have a long-lasting impact on their lives. For example, for decades I have received Christmas greetings from a guy who was in my junior high group when I was in college.

God entrusted a certain number of kids to each youth group. Our faithfulness to those kids and their friends will lead to additional teens in our ministries. A quality program can be provided to kids, no matter what size fellowship.

Are church libraries cost effective with regard to their usage?

Church libraries are an excellent vehicle for supplementing the teaching ministry of a local church. Books, CDs, videos and DVDs available in a library are useful for enrichment, research for Bible studies, and even outreach to others. Libraries are a very significant tool for ministry, but the question remains, are they cost effective?

For a library to be cost effective it must have a high enough usage to justify the funds committed to this ministry. A library that is used often can justify a significant amount of money in a Christian education budget.

A balance should be sought between reference materials and contemporary Christian reading. A balance between books and digital media must also be sought. Donated books will cut expenses, but books should only be accepted and processed which will have a good circulation. While reference books are important, a few sets of good works are better than many different books. The reference section is essential, but is not used as much as the contemporary section.

Book reviews in Christian periodicals can make the library committee aware of classics and best sellers. Good quality, high interest books, CDs and DVDs will make the library appealing. A library in constant use can then justify the needed funds for supplemental educational resources.

How can we encourage more people to use our church library?

There are three important ingredients to a growing library ministry: location, promotion and quality. If any of these concerns are overlooked, the effectiveness of the library will decrease. Usage of the library is directly related to all three ingredients.

The church library should be located in the most traveled area of the church campus. Usually this will mean it should be placed near the worship center, perhaps off the foyer. If there is a heavy traffic flow from a parking lot to the auditorium, a room in the building between those locations might also prove beneficial. Few people will use a library that is out of the way. If the library usage is to grow, its location must be obvious to people who are moving about the campus.

Ongoing promotion of the church library also helps to keep that ministry fresh in people's minds. They may travel past the library door every single Sunday, but not

actually choose to go in until they read the title of a newly processed book in the church bulletin. Posters, notes in the church bulletin, announcements in the church newsletter, an occasional mailing, and reference to the library by the pastor all encourage people to checkout the library.

Encouragement and announcements may bring people to the library, but if it is disorganized, unattractive, out-of-date or unappealing, it will be difficult to get dissatisfied users to return. A good library must be attractive, well-stocked and of good quality. When the library is open, someone should be there who can answer questions regarding the resources. The personal warmth of the library staff provides the finishing touch for a well-equipped, well-promoted and sensibly located library.

Is there anything wrong with developing our own programs?

During one school holiday our family visited Washington, D.C. Ben and Betsy agreed that their favorite part of the trip was visiting the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum. While the early aircraft were interesting, it was the space rockets that thrilled them most. The huge rockets and the Mercury, Gemini and Apollo capsules were a testimony of the ability of scientists to develop vehicles for travel to specific, exciting destinations. The Apollo missions were specifically designed to reach and study the moon. The space capsule, lunar lander, astronaut suits, moon buggy and other equipment were all created to accomplish a predetermined task.

Similarly, the church exists to provide a vehicle for corporate worship, biblical instruction, intimate fellowship, and evangelistic witness. The function of doctrinal teaching will never change, but the forms we use to instill Christian truth will vary. The message is permanent; but our methods vary to give that message maximum impact.

There is nothing inherently wrong with a church developing its own programs. Who better knows the needs of a local congregation? But before we start building new vehicles, two questions should be raised: (1) What am I trying to accomplish that requires this new vehicle; and (2) Has someone else already invented a suitable vehicle?

Our Lord has told us to use our time wisely. When applying that principle to programs and curriculum, there are only a few reasons for launching one's own product. Many good programs and solid curriculum are already available to use as designed, or adapt for our needs.

On the other hand, there may be some specific educational emphasis that we desire which would best be served by our own created programs. For example, one church wanted to provide their children a variety of spiritual emphases. So as a release time feature of the worship service, children were dismissed to their 4-M Program. For thirty minutes each week, while the pastor was preaching, they had a rotation program consisting of *music*, *missions*, *movies*, and *ministry*. Four couples took one responsibility each, serving one Sunday every month. The ministry day was especially enjoyable for the children, for they were able to make things (like fruit baskets to share with shut-ins).

In another situation, a church developed a R.I.F. Program for children. This program helped third and fourth graders learn by utilizing the resources of the library. Through the *Reading Is Fun Program*, the kids heard a story each week and were challenged to check out books for further enjoyment.

Programs are vehicles for accomplishing purposes. We do not simply want to do what the church down the street does; neither do we want to reinvent the wheel. When we have defined and understand our church's discipleship goals, we can use both existing forms and newer creative ways to reach those goals.

Summary

When we watch a football game we see a collage of sets and plays. We observe running plays, passing attempts and kicking downs. After viewing several contests, we get an understanding of what football is all about.

When we study Christian education, we realize that our program is larger than just the Sunday School. There are many parts to a discipleship program, and when these emphases are played well together, successful learning occurs. Our goal of "presenting all people mature in Christ" will never change. The designing of programs to accomplish this goal will always be our exciting task.

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