

Study Notes:

Equipping Teachers

1. The One-Minute Witness

Since contacts with parents are usually brief, it is vital that a teacher is able to express his or her Christian faith in a brief manner. The “Three Owl” approach is suggested. Three questions beginning with “Who” are to be answered in witness: Who is God? Who am I? Who is Christ? For example, a teacher talking with a troubled parent might say, “When I am in trouble, I remember that God my Father who is in heaven is always with me. Even though I don’t do all things right, He still loves me. He loves me so much that He gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for me. I know I am saved.” Teachers are urged to practice this skill working with one another. As they practice, they should envision a variety of situations and then develop brief witnessing responses.

2. Active Listening

Nearly every day teachers have opportunities for chatting with parents, either in person or by the phone. Often parents have something to ask or to say to the teacher.

Teachers need to know how to listen actively. When listening actively to a parent, or student, the teacher will let that person know you are listening carefully by maintaining eye contact, not allowing your attention to be diverted, and reflecting what the speaker says by brief comments or empathetic reactions. Basically, active listening is just good listening, with an emphasis on letting the speaker know that you are hearing what is being said. Active listening is evidence that you care. After listening actively, the teacher’s response will show care, interest, and empathy. Usually as the teacher responds, he or she will have an opportunity for a one-minute witness.

Working together, teachers might identify a variety of conversations they frequently have with parents or students. Teachers might then identify and rehearse ways to be active listeners and respond with empathy including a one-minute witness.

3. School Purpose Witness

Teachers have frequent opportunities to tell the purpose of their school with friends, congregation members, and prospective parents and students. Generally, there is not sufficient time to give a comprehensive answer. Working together, teachers might want to prepare a variety of brief statements that can be rehearsed and used in various situations. For example, “Our school helps children know Jesus Christ and live in His Love.” “Our school is a place where God is at work.” “Children know that God made them and gave them a purpose in life. They know Jesus Christ, God’s Son, who loves them and forgives them every day.” Usually, conversations like this open up opportunities for further discussion and witness.

4. Jesus Talk

“Jesus talk” is using natural opportunities to mention Jesus and your faith. For example, if a person sneezes we often say “Gesundheit,” or “Bless you.” Jesus talk suggests saying “God bless you” or “God give you good health.” Instead of saying “I was lucky” say “God blessed me.” To develop this skill, teachers need to list situations where they can naturally refer to God or Jesus as they express their faith.

5. Bible Talk

This skill involves memorizing 10 key Bible passages and their references so they can be used when witnessing to parents. These key passages relate directly to concerns that parents most frequently share with teachers. The texts follow:

Matt. 11:28. "Come to Me all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."
(When someone is concerned, worried, or ready to give up.)

Matt. 19:26. "With God all things are possible." (To encourage someone lacking in confidence.)

Matt. 28:20. "I am with you always." (Good news for someone who feels lonely.)

John 3:16. "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son." (For those who feel unloved.)

John 6:37. "Whoever comes to Me I will never drive away." (For someone experiencing desperation.)

John 14:1. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God." (For someone who is worried.)

John 14:6. "I am the way... No one comes to the Father except through Me." (For someone experiencing doubt.)

Rom. 8:28. "In all things God works for the good of those who love Him." (For someone struggling with sickness, injury, or other problems.)

Rom. 8:39. "[Nothing] will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Good news for someone who is overburdened and struggling.)

Eph. 2:8. "By grace you have been saved through faith...not by works." (For someone feeling hopeless or worried about their "goodness.")

1 John 4:19. "We love because He first loved us." (A word of comfort for someone who feels unloved.)

First memorize these passages and the references, then determine how they can be applied to specific questions or concerns expressed by parents.

6. Communicate Care

In the classroom Lutheran School teachers have many opportunities for communicating care to their students as they wink, smile, touch, express their concern, and help. However, these expressions of care are not communicated to the families directly. Thus, Lutheran school teachers need to develop specific ways to communicate care to the families. Here are some examples:

- a. Listen actively whenever a parents speaks.
- b. Take time to listen and to talk to a parent with needs.
- c. Visit ill students and family members
- d. Express a willingness to help parents and ask how you can help, so they accept your willingness.
- e. Express your love for all your students.
- f. Send Christian greeting cards for family anniversaries or celebrations such as Baptism, birthday, wedding, graduation, and confirmation.
- g. Inquire about previous students who have gone on to other schools.

7. Witness Planning

Most often witnessing occurs by chance as we meet people or encounter situations. Beyond that, teachers have many opportunities for witnessing in special ways.

Teachers individually, or as a faculty, are encouraged to list persons (students, parents, prospective parents and students, members, individuals, and families in the community) that present witnessing opportunities. Remember the variety of circumstances, both negative and positive, encountered by these people. In some cases your witness can introduce or point them to Jesus Christ. To those already in the faith, your witness can edify, “build up,” and give comfort and hope. Church workers need also to witness to each other.

With your list complete, note potential times and places that present good witnessing opportunities. For each person, or family, on your list, develop a brief strategy for your witnessing. Review your list frequently to keep you alert to your witnessing opportunities.

Be sure to keep your witnessing prospects on your prayer list, seeking God’s direction and blessings as you witness to these prospects.

8. Prayer Witnessing

Teachers encounter frequent opportunities in the classroom, in home visits, and in parent-teacher consultations for praying with another person or persons. These prayer opportunities are often overlooked. Prayer opportunities are also opportunities for witnessing. For example, if a parent says in the conclusion of a teacher consultation, “I’m really delighted that Rona is doing so well in school.” To open the door for prayer the teacher might say, “I am too, let’s say a brief prayer of thanks to God for His blessings.” Or, parents may say, “We really don’t know why Danny is so shy, but we’ll try to get him involved with other kids more.” A Lutheran teacher might respond, “When I have a special need that I am trying to work on, I find it very helpful to ask the Lord for help. Would you join me in a prayer for Danny?”

Prayer witnessing can frequently be used with any of the above witnessing skills.

9. Prayer Requests

This skill can often be used in connection with the previous skill, prayer witnessing. After praying with a parent, a student, or any other person you may have on your witnessing list, ask if there are other matters he or she or they would like to present to the Lord in prayer. You may offer a prayer at that time. Or you may give assurance that you will pray for them and their concern at another time. Children can be invited to share their prayer requests with you. So can parents.

In some instances, the entire class can join in prayer. An example: Stephanie, a fifth-grader, requested the teacher and the class to pray for her mother, who was seriously ill. On three consecutive days, the teacher let the children in prayer for Stephanie’s mother. On the first day the teacher wrote a note to Stephanie’s mother wishing her God’s blessing and informing her that Stephanie’s classmates were praying for her. Following the third day, the teacher visited Stephanie’s mother, who was on her way to good health again. The mother expressed her gratitude to the teacher and to the class and invited the teacher to say a prayer of thanks. This prayer request concept can be extended to encompass many people and many concerns.

10. Prayers of Praise

Prayers can easily digress into mere “gimmies,” where we address the Lord and then ask for something immediately. “Gimmy” prayers seldom hold opportunities for witness. More mature prayers praise God our Father in heaven, indicate our own sin and need for forgiveness and direction, and praise God that He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to save us. Prayers that give praise to God are witnessing prayers. Teachers, and other Christians, who would be evangelists and witnesses, need to learn the skill of praising God whenever they pray. Often, prayers of praise need to be practiced and rehearsed; however, they must always retain the quality of sincerity.

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