LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A CURRICULUM OF TOPICS FOR TEACHING

SENIOR ADULTS IN SUNDAY SCHOOL

A Thesis Project Submitted to
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

Homer Massey

Lynchburg, Virginia

August, 2002
ABSTRACT

A CURRICULUM OF TOPICS FOR TEACHING SENIOR ADULTS IN SUNDAY SCHOOL

Homer Massey

Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002

Mentor: Dr. Rick L. Rasberry

The purpose of this project is to develop a curriculum of topics directed toward the needs and interests of senior adults in a Sunday School program. Their general needs will be determined through reviews of statistical information and current literature. Basic principles of curriculum design will be consulted along with analysis of sample curriculum materials and research in the area of adult Christian education. An appropriate curriculum plan for senior adults will then be developed based on surveys that reflect their current needs and preferences in the area of Sunday School teaching.
CONTENTS

Chapter I.  INTRODUCTION . . . . . . . . 1

- Basis for Choice of Topic
- Statement of the Problem
- Statement of Scope and Limitations
- Description of Methodology
- Review of Selected Literature

Chapter II.  BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION . . . . . 8

- The Centrality of the Word of God
- The Person of Jesus Christ
- The Apostolic Tradition
- The New Testament Church
- The Sunday School Movement
- Other Adult Christian Education
- Summary

Chapter III.  GENERAL NEEDS OF SENIOR ADULTS . . . . 25

- A Sociological Perspective
- Current Information
- Aging Needs Assessment: A Survey
- Summary

Chapter IV.  EXPRESSED NEEDS OF SENIOR ADULTS . . . . 42

- Rationale for the Questionnaire
- Analysis of the Survey Results
- Summary

Chapter V.  BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CURRICULUM DESIGN . . . . 52

- Introduction
- The Church Objective
- The Educational Objective
- The Scope
- The Context
- The Methodology
- How Adults Learn
- Summary
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Basis for Choice of Topic

There are several reasons behind the choice of this topic. First, this writer has been in full-time Christian ministry for thirty-five years, with the majority of those years involving adults and senior adults. While serving as Associate Pastor at the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia from 1975 to 1984, the writer taught a class of senior adults for several years. As Senior Pastor at the Emmanuel Baptist Church in Elizabeth City, North Carolina from 1984 to 1987, a ministry for senior adults and shut-ins was established.

From 1987 to 1990 the writer was Associate Staff Pastor at Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia. During those years one of his assignments was with the Senior Saints Ministry (now known as 50 Plus Ministry), ministering to senior adults. Since 1991 he has been with Liberty University, but has continued to work with adults and senior adults. He presently teaches the Steadfast Bible Class, the second longest-running adult Sunday School class at Thomas Road Baptist Church. While this class is open to adults of all ages, and the ages of class members range from people in their thirties to people in their nineties, the predominant age group is sixty to eighty.
The writer became interested in lesson materials for teaching senior adults after observing that some publishers’ materials did not always meet needs, and some churches have no set curriculum for senior adults in Sunday School. As a result he became interested in studying this problem.

Second, the writer chose this topic in hopes that through this exercise he would become better equipped to minister to senior adults. Whether in pastoral ministry or Sunday School teaching, the writer believes the knowledge gained in this research will give him valuable insight into this important part of the gospel ministry.

Third, the writer hopes this project can contribute to the field of Christian education, especially in the area of Sunday School teaching, by providing an alternative in the choice of curriculum. He believes his background and experience in this area, along with an evaluation of the surveys and other research from this project will be such that it will benefit others.

Finally, the writer is mindful of the mission of the church, from the overall responsibility to fulfill the Great Commission to the responsibility of pastors in "equipping the saints for the work of the ministry" (Ephesians 4:12a, NKJV). He believes older Christians, who are generally living longer and healthier than they have in the past few hundred years, are potentially a powerful group that must be mobilized for the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ in coming years. He believes that having the results of this research available will assist leaders in accomplishing that.
Statement of the Problem

The curriculum material from publishers of Sunday School literature does not always meet the needs and interests of many senior adults. Also, many independent Baptist churches do not use curriculum materials produced by a publisher, but instead either have no set curriculum or let the adult teachers decide. Don Anderson of the Regular Baptist Press observed, “Some churches don’t use curriculum materials because, as they say, ‘We just teach the Bible.’”¹ Often this means there is no real plan. As a result this project was undertaken to either suggest an alternative or to provide a curriculum.

This project will analyze the needs and interests of senior adults in the area of Sunday School teaching, and develop a curriculum of topics to meet those needs and interests. The following questions will guide the research, and their answers will become the basis for any conclusions that are reached:

1. What is the Scriptural basis of ministry to senior adults?
2. What are the needs and interests of senior adults?
3. What principles should be used in preparing a curriculum for senior adults?
4. What curriculum can be developed to meet these needs and interests?

These questions guided the research for the main areas of concern. In chapter two an answer to the first question is offered. In order to answer the second question, research was done and surveys were carried out concerning the needs and interests of

¹ Don Anderson, Improving Your Sunday School (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 2001), 79.
adults aged sixty-five and older. That research is found in chapters three and four. The third question involved summarizing the principles that experts in that field say should be used in curriculum design. That constitutes chapter five. The resulting curriculum of topics explained in chapter six answers the fourth question.

**Statement of Scope and Limitations**

The field of Christian education is so large that it is obviously necessary to narrow the focus of the project to manageable parameters.

First, the project is not concerned with a study of curriculum in general, but with curriculum as it exists in church Sunday School programs. Second, the project is not concerned with all age groups in Sunday School, but is limited to senior adults, which in most circles is defined as those individuals sixty-five or older in age. Third, the project is not concerned with the implementation of or the administration of the curriculum that will be developed, or how that curriculum might fit into the overall plan for an entire Sunday School. While that is certainly important, it is not the focus of this study.

Fourth, the project is not concerned with the specific kind of individual lessons to be developed within the curriculum, but is simply concerned with developing the topics in such a curriculum. Finally, the project is not concerned with teaching methods or other means of presentation, but rather with topics that meet the needs and interests of senior adults.

The focus of this study is summed up by the questions raised at the beginning of

---

this chapter. Any issues not raised by these questions fall outside the parameters of this study. When these questions are satisfactorily answered, the project will be successfully concluded.

Description of Methodology

The research involved several approaches. First, works by leaders in the field of Christian education were consulted to examine the basis in the Word of God for adult Christian education. Second, a review of statistical information from local and national sources related to the characteristics and needs of senior adults in general was conducted. Third, literature in the area of curriculum design as it relates to church Sunday School programs was surveyed to determine what basic principles must be followed in developing a curriculum of topics for teaching senior adults. Fourth, literature in the area of ministry through the Sunday School to senior adults was reviewed with the goal in mind of effectively applying these principles to such a curriculum. Finally, a questionnaire was distributed to 502 senior adults in central Virginia to determine first hand the needs and preferences of this age group regarding Sunday School teaching.

Computer searches produced a lot of the general statistical information used in the study, as well as current studies related to senior adults. While many of the foundational areas of the study were gathered from the usual books and journal articles, the writer discovered a wealth of information on the internet having to do with the ever changing view of the modern day senior adult. Some of that information is reflected in this study.
Review of Selected Literature

Offering practical Christian advice to those facing the prospect of aging parents, this volume deals with a wide range of general information concerning the aging process from a Christian viewpoint.

The writers describe their studies that were part of a major change in the way churches developed curricula for their programs. In so doing they provide practical explanations of the principles underlying this process.

In this work an educator presents a Christian approach to education for evangelical Christian schools and colleges. It is scholarly yet written in such a way that non-professionals would benefit from it.

This recent work, subtitled *Integrating Biblical Truth and Contemporary Application*, discusses the important area of applying scriptural truths to everyday situations. In it the writer presents current ideas and techniques for the teacher who wants to make the Bible come alive.

This an up-to-date discussion of the important areas of leadership and leadership training as they relate to Christian ministry. Starting with the leadership style and methodology of the Lord, Gangel presents ways to utilize the spiritual gifts of professionals and laymen to build teams of men and women who can minister to the church’s needs.

Gangel and Wilhoit edited this work which includes entries from twenty-five experts in various areas of adult education. It is essentially an evaluation of what is being done in these areas as the church enters the twenty-first century.

This is primarily Dr. Hendricks’ well-known presentation of “The Seven Laws of the Teacher.”
This landmark book was probably the first to point out major changes in American society in the area of aging and retirement. Though not a Christian work, it provides valuable insight into the changing landscape.

This more recent publication discusses how the church can improve its ministry to senior adults, and how senior adults can increase their ministry in both religious and marketplace settings.

This book provides an overview of the various stages of adult life, what is typical in those stages, and how the church needs to respond to adults as they travel through the stages.

In this work by an educator at a major state university, an analysis is presented of the settings and methods of Jesus Christ from an professional viewpoint.
CHAPTER TWO

THE BIBLICAL/THEOLOGICAL BASIS OF ADULT
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The Centrality of the Word of God

The broad field of Christian education is made up of several areas. A philosophy of education must be derived from a Christ-centered philosophy of life, and from that must flow the processes of education such as establishment of aims and objectives, teacher-pupil relationships, curriculum, methods, and administration. These must all be made relevant to the subject areas including not only Biblical studies, but also social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, and communication skills.

For education to be Christian the subject areas must reflect the underlying Christian philosophy. H. W. Byrne narrows it further when he states, “To be truly Christian, the curriculum must be Bible-integrated in theory and practice. By this is meant that the Bible is to provide more than theoretical guidance and generalization. Rather, it is to be a vital part of the content and integrated with all subject matter.”

So, the Bible is central in Christian education. Kenneth Gangel brings the adult aspect into focus when he says, “Essentially the Bible is an adult book written by adults

---

1 H. W. Byrne, _A Christian Approach to Education_ (Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1977), 61.
for adults and about adults."² The church’s ministry to children and young people is certainly based on the Bible, and much can be found in the Bible about them and for teaching them, but, as Gangel continues, “almost all of it, however, falls within the context of the family or congregation in which adults carry out that ministry.”³ And further, “God talks about adult responsibilities so frequently He must assume we are equipping people to carry them out.”⁴

Byrne points out that there are three strategic parts in the overall area of Biblical Studies: Bible, Christian Theology, and Christian Philosophy. Space does not permit a through coverage of all his points, but he helps the present discussion by offering that “the following list reveals the strategic place that Bible has in the curriculum:

1. It provides for the historical record of God’s revelation
2. It provides much content for study.
3. It tests and measures all truth by its principles.
4. It releases the thought-structures by which thinking can be guided.
5. It provides great principles which form the substance of Christian Theology and Christian Philosophy.

³ Ibid., 13.
⁴ Ibid.
6. It provides the bases whereby integration and correlation are made possible in the curriculum as a whole."

Some examples of the centrality of the Word of God may be found in the Old Testament, where the Law and later the writings of the psalmists and prophets were central parts of the educational process for God’s people. Jack Terry contributes this observation in *The Teaching Ministry of the Church*:

One passage etched deeply in the Hebrew consciousness was Deuteronomy 6:4-9, called the Shema. Apparently, this passage set the agenda for the home and the nation. The instruction of the Shema spoke not only to the nature of God but also to the important place of education in the life of the Jew. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.” (Deut. 6:4-9).

Education has always been a passion with the Hebrews. The curriculum of the Hebrew faith was always the Scripture. First, the study of the Torah. Later the Prophets and the Writings. Added to this curriculum was the Mishna, the oral tradition handed down from family to family and generation to generation, eventually ending up as the Talmud. Much later in the synagogues during the postexilic period, the Apocrypha and the Pseudepigrapha were added to the curriculum of the Hebrew child.

Recitation, story-telling, symbolism, question and answer, parables, and other learning activities were used in the lessons to build a cultural consciousness of an omnipotent God. Monotheism was the major theme of study, transmitted through daily and weekly rituals, life events, and religious feasts and festivals.  

---

5 Byrne, 74.

Just as the Law was a means of education for the Hebrew people, the same was true of their other institutions. Their family life, rituals, and celebrations of the Tabernacle and Temple worship, all provided opportunities for passing the Jewish tradition down through the generations.

C. B. Eavey points out, “Judaism exerted influence upon Christianity in the sphere of education also. From the education that had developed among the Jews much was taken over into the theory and practice of Christian education.” He continues, “Presumably, in a Jewish household which had become Christian, parental responsibility toward the children therein would be carried out much as it had been under Judaism. It would be logical to assume that more, rather than less, emphasis was put on the use of Scriptures…”

The Person of Jesus Christ

No one is more crucial to adult Christian education than the Messiah, the Savior, Jesus Christ. Acknowledged as the greatest teacher of all time, it was said of Him, “No man ever spoke like this Man.” (John 7:46 NKJV). Stalker noted, “All His words together which have been preserved to us would not occupy more space in print than half-a-dozen ordinary sermons; yet it is not too much to say, that they are the most precious literary heritage of the human race.”

Speaking of the ways Jesus did His work, the first being the miracles he

---

8 Ibid., 76.
performed, Stalker observes, “The other great instrument with which Jesus did His work was His teaching. It was by far the more important of the two. His miracles were only the bell tolled to bring the people to hear His words. They impressed those who might not yet be susceptible to the subtler influence, and brought them within its range.”

Gangel and Wilhoit add,

Truth is inherent in Jesus Christ because He provides the supreme revelation of God. He came “full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14 NIV). Propositional truths in the Scriptures facilitate personal encounter and fellowship with Jesus Christ. Thus, the function of Scripture is instrumental – the means of bringing people face-to-face with Christ. God commands all people to repent and turn to Him from their sinful ways through faith in Jesus Christ.

Bible study for adults involves both an understanding of the truth and an application of it. Education that is Christian must be totally absorbed with Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Scriptures, and with leading us to spiritual maturity through Him. “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.” (Col. 1:28, NRSV).

Dr. Clifford Wilson has pointed out, “Jesus the Master Teacher is relevant for both teachers and pupils in Education today. His aims, His methods, and His content are of great importance. The way of life which He exemplified and taught can do much to restore equilibrium in this age, groping somewhat blindly as it is for a purpose in the Education of those who will be the leaders of the next generation.”

Eavey concludes:

Jesus regarded Himself as a teacher. He spoke of Himself as such, He permitted others to address Him thus, and He was generally regarded by others as a teacher. The term “Master,” so frequently used in the Gospels, is a translation of the Greek word, didaskelalos, “teacher.” The disciples often spoke to Him and referred to

10 Ibid., 64.

11 Gangel and Wilhoit, 38.

12 Clifford Wilson, Jesus the Teacher (Victoria, Australia: Word of Truth, Ltd., 1974), 160.
Him as teacher; rarely did they use any other title. His addresses contained so much of the teaching element that people always thought of Him as a teacher. The disciples and others could not help recognizing the teaching function of His parables because they were so didactic in nature. People other than the disciples gave Jesus the title of teacher. Nicodemus addressed him thus, and then went on to say, “We know that thou art a teacher come from God.” Even His opponents among the Pharisees, the Sadduccees, the Herodians, and others called Him “the teacher.”

Jesus and His teachings are the heart of adult Christian education. J. M. Price noted that “Jesus saw in teaching the supreme opportunity for shaping the ideals, attitudes, and conduct of people. He was not primarily an orator, reformer, or ruler, but rather a teacher.”

The Apostolic Tradition

Another important element in a discussion of the biblical basis of adult Christian education is the existence of a tradition in the history of the early church where the apostles added, by inspiration of God, to the foundation of the Old Testament writers and the teachings of Jesus Christ. The basis, of course, of all Christian education is the gospel or “good news” of salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Two two Greek words have been used almost interchangeably in discussing this foundation, kerygma and euaggelion. Both terms deal with the essence of the gospel.

---

13 Eavey, 78.

14 J. M. Price, Jesus the Teacher (Nashville: The Sunday School Board, 1945), 5.
Harrison points out, "*kerygma* stresses the manner of delivery; *euaggelion*, the essential nature of the content."\(^{15}\)

The primacy of preaching was a hallmark of the early church. To young preachers the Apostle Paul issued the command “preach the Word” (2 Timothy 4:2), because he had also declared that “the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).\(^{16}\)

Preaching “the gospel” meant proclaiming the good news that “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time (1 Corinthians 15:3b-8).

While the four gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John essentially represent the teachings of Christ, the remainder of the New Testament is made up of this apostolic pattern, or tradition. It includes writings by several of the early apostles (John, Peter, and James), as well as by Jude, the brother of our Lord.

This material grows out of the experiences each of them had with Jesus, and by inspiration of the Holy Spirit have been passed down to modern-day Christians for a specific purpose: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for

---

\(^{15}\) Everett F. Harrison (ed.), *Baker's Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 256.

\(^{16}\) All Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version unless otherwise noted.
doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). It has become the “stuff” of Christian education.

The most prominent individual God used in this pattern or tradition was the Apostle Paul, who wrote thirteen (fourteen if Hebrews is included) of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. While not one of the twelve, he claimed apostleship based on his conversion experience on the way to Damascus (Acts 9). He soon established himself in this tradition.

Paul believed that his message, his teaching, was the same as what the rest of the apostles preached and taught. He believed that what he taught about the essence of the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15 was what was passed down to him not only from the first apostles but from Christ Himself.

In verses 11-15 Paul says,

Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed. Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection from the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

Paul reiterated this in Galatians 1:11-12:

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Jesus predicted that He would be killed and raised again the third day (Matthew 16:21), and when He died the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate and reminded him
of the prediction, fearing that the disciples would steal Christ’s body. The important factual tradition involving the details of the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ was passed on to Paul. In verse 11 Paul refers to the preaching of the apostles on this subject, stating that it was the same regardless of who was preaching.

Indeed, Paul’s preaching was considered by Luke to be in the same tradition as the apostles. C. H. Dodd pointed out,

In the Synoptic Gospels we read of “preaching the Kingdom of God,” whether the reference is to Jesus or to his followers. In the Pauline epistles we commonly read of “preaching Christ.” In the Acts of the Apostles both forms of expression are used. The apostles preach “Jesus” or “Christ,” or they preach “the Kingdom of God.” We may observe that in those parts of Acts where the writer speaks in the first person Paul himself is represented as “preaching the Kingdom of God.” We may therefore take it that a companion of Paul regarded his preaching as being just as much a proclamation of the Kingdom of God as was the preaching of the first disciples or of their Master, even though Paul himself does not himself speak of it in those terms.17

As to the question of how Paul would have received this tradition, Habermas says,

A number of scholars have arrived at the same scenario. Dating Christ’s crucifixion around AD 30, Paul’s conversion would have occurred shortly afterwards, about AD 33-35. Three years after his conversion (AD 36-38) he visited Jerusalem and specifically met with Peter and James (Galatians 1:18-19). It is therefore reasoned that the gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus would in all likelihood be the normal center of discussion, and that the presence of both Peter and James in the list of appearances (1 Corinthians 15:5, 7) indicates the probability that Paul received this creed from these apostles when he visited them in Jerusalem.18

The content of Paul’s epistles indicates exactly what he preached, and while 1 Corinthians 15 is not exactly kerygma, it does correspond to the preaching of the apostles


who were witnesses to the resurrection. Paul had this in mind when he reminded the
church in 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 how they “turned to God from idols to serve the living
and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven whom he raised up from the dead,
even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”

Dodd points out:

Paul himself at least believed that in essentials his Gospel was that of the
primitive apostles; for although in Galatians 1:11-18 he states with emphasis that
he did not derive it from any human source, nevertheless in the same epistle (2:2)
he says that he submitted the ‘Gospel which I preach’ to Peter, James and John at
Jerusalem, and that they gave their approval. Not only so, but in the locus
classicus, I Cor. XV. I sqq., he expressly declares that this summary of the Gospel
is what he had ‘received” as tradition. . .”19

While Paul’s writings constitute a great deal of this tradition, adult Christian
education owes much to Peter, James, John and Jude as well. Hiebert reminds us that:

The importance of these epistles cannot be judged by the amount of space they
take in our canon. In comparison to the historical books (Gospels and Acts) or the
Pauline epistles, the non-Pauline epistles constitute only a comparatively minor
part of the New Testament. Yet how enormous would have been our loss if they
had been excluded from the canon!

These epistles are also important as mirroring the conditions of the Church during
the latter part of the apostolic era. Except for James, which appears to be the
earliest book in the New Testament, all of the non-Pauline epistles relate to a time
within the seventh decade of the Christian era or later. Here we see the growing
consciousness of the unity of the true church in the midst of developing evil. The
development of the pernicious weeds of false doctrine in the midst of the pure
wheat of the Gospel, already seen in the Pauline epistles, especially the pastorals,
here comes into greater prominence. These epistles form a suitable link between
the Acts and the Pauline epistles on the one hand and the Revelation on the
other.20

19 Dodd, 13.
20 Hiebert, 21, 22.
The New Testament Church

Growing out of this apostolic tradition, the New Testament teaching of the church is not just an integral part of the basis for adult Christian education, it is the foundation. Jesus said to Peter, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). This statement has been the subject of much controversy, with some claiming that Jesus was referring to the Apostle Peter and others saying it could only have referred to Christ Himself.

In this passage Peter had just expressed his great confession of Jesus, saying, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Turner explained that "many biblical scholars believe it was this confession of Peter, and the faith that lay behind it, which was the rock on which Jesus was to build his church," but then almost immediately said, "and yet, after all has been said, it is true in a very real sense that 'The Church’s One Foundation is Jesus Christ Her Lord.'"\(^2\)

Regardless of which interpretation one chooses, the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ is what the New Testament church is built upon, and thus is what adult Christian education is built upon. Elmer Towns, in *Theology for Today*, gives a theological definition of a church:

1. A church is an assembly of professing believers.
2. The unique presence of Jesus Christ dwells in a church.
3. A church is under the discipline of the Word of God.

4. A church is organized to carry out the Great Commission.

5. A church administers the ordinances.

6. A church reflects the spiritual gifts.\textsuperscript{22}

So, the church is God’s called-out people who, under the authority of the Word of God, are to fulfill the Great Commission, administer the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and carry out God’s work on earth by exercising the spiritual gifts given to them. In the Great Commission Jesus said, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

This commission is a mandate for adult Christian education. To accomplish the purpose of a New Testament local church means that disciples are to be made and taught to do the work of God on earth.

\textbf{The Sunday School Movement}

While much has been accomplished through the centuries since the early church, because of limitations of space the focus of this study will be on early Christian education in America. Eavey says,

The history of Christian education in colonial America is the history of the development of general education. The two were inseparably united because the first settlers were mostly of the Protestant faith and a large percentage of them

held the firm conviction that the Gospel was the means to personal salvation. Logically, this required teaching each child to read, else he could not become acquainted with the Scriptures to gain the knowledge necessary for salvation and the living of the Christian life. Not being allowed to worship and to rear their children as they wished in their homelands, many Christian congregations left Europe and came to settle in America. Here they built their social, political and ecclesiastical institutions on the firm foundation of a general education that was fundamentally Christian.\textsuperscript{23}

In that sort of setting, and aided by some early state-sponsored church schools, Christian education quickly grew from home schooling to elementary and preparatory schools. "Religious faith was deemed more important than academic training"\textsuperscript{24} Eavey observed. He also pointed out that Harvard College was founded in 1636 for the preparation of ministers, Yale in 1701 and Princeton in 1746 for the same purpose.\textsuperscript{25} It was not until 1755 that the University of Pennsylvania, the "first institution of higher learning in America without definite denominational connection"\textsuperscript{26} was founded.

During this period in England a newspaper editor named Robert Raikes began what became known as "Sunday School" in 1780 to reach rowdy poor children in his home city of Gloucester. Elmer Towns states that "in just four years Sunday School enrollment in England reached 250,000 children, and by (Raikes') death in 1811 approximately 1,250,00 children in Great Britain were being reached weekly by Sunday School."\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{23} Eavey, 189.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 195.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 193-201.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 201.

\textsuperscript{27} Elmer L. Towns, \textit{How to Grow an Effective Sunday School} (Lynchburg: Church Growth Institute, 1987), 149.
Towns continues, "The first recorded American Sunday School was started in 1785 in Oak Grove, Virginia by William Elliott," then in the same section, "just 11 years after Robert Raikes started the first Sunday School in England, a new Sunday School Society was organized in Philadelphia. Within three months this group raised $3,968 for the establishment of new Sunday Schools."28 Thus began what has become the most prominent means of Christian education in modern times.

Towns explains why the Sunday School has had such a lasting impact:

A true Sunday School has four unique characteristics: (1) it reaches the unsaved as well as Christian children; (2) instruction is given from the Word of God rather than the oral question and answer drills of catechism; (3) its purpose is to evangelize the lost as well as to instruct the saved; and (4) it is operated by laymen rather than by clergymen.29

A Sunday School properly organized and administered will accomplish the same objectives as the New Testament local church, and its students, young and old, will carry out the Great Commission. Therefore it is a vital link in this brief summary of the progression of adult Christian education.

Other Adult Christian Education

While the Sunday School has been perhaps the most predominant vehicle for adult Christian education, there have been other notable and lasting institutions involved in its promotion through the years. Eavey lists several, including Bible institutes, Vacation Bible Schools, Weekday Schools of Religion, Young People's Societies,

---
28 Ibid., 150.

29 Ibid., 149-150.
Extrachurch Organizations, Camps and Conferences.\textsuperscript{30} Surprisingly, this list has not changed much since his book was written in 1964, although each has undergone some changes.

Eavey continues,

Three movements causing Christians to feel keenly the need for education such as Bible institutes give were the Sunday School, movement, revivalism, and missionary expansion. The Sunday School was a lay organization staffed by lay teachers. They typical lay teacher had no educational training. With the development of normal school training of public school teachers, the inadequacy of the preparation of Sunday School teachers became painfully evident. As early as 1847, a plea was made to train Sunday School teachers in a manner comparable to the training given public school teachers. Not many years thereafter, Dr. John H. Vincent suggested the idea of Sunday School teacher institutes, modeled after those in vogue for the training of public school teachers. And in the years following he proceeded to organize institutes for Sunday School teachers, starting them in various parts of the country.\textsuperscript{31}

Thus began the Bible institute movement. It produced not only Sunday School teachers but through men such as evangelists Charles G. Finney and Dwight L. Moody, workers for evangelistic and missionary work. Some still have diploma programs, such as Moody Bible Institute and the Bible Institute of Los Angeles (BIOLA), but have added degree programs as well.

Even some of the programs such as Vacation Bible School, which are primarily for children, provide opportunities for adult teachers and other workers who carry out the programs. Many churches now have VBS for the entire family. Other organizations that may primarily exist for children or young people have many adults involved, and these

\textsuperscript{30} Eavey, 331.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 336
adults must be trained.

For purposes of this study it is also important to note that Sunday School and other Christian educational programs for older Christians have a potential two-fold importance. The potential impact of assisting senior adults in uncovering spiritual gifts and/or natural abilities, and aiding them in finding opportunities to exercise those gifts or make use of those abilities, can be especially fulfilling to those who minister as well as to senior adults themselves.

The reverse is also important: the potential opportunity to reach, train, and mobilize a group of volunteers who may often have more time to render needed services or be soul winners is especially attractive to churches who desire to expand their ministry.

Summary

Beginning with the centrality of the Word of God, and more specifically the person of Jesus Christ, the writer has sought to demonstrate the biblical and theological basis of adult Christian education. Built upon the foundation of Jewish education was the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Added to this was the ministry of the apostles. Jesus established His church, which He commissioned to make disciples and train them to carry on His work on earth. The legacy of the early church has been maintained and carried forward by many ecclesiastical and educational entities, most recently the Sunday School.

In this tradition the writer desires to establish a rationale for determining and meeting the needs of senior adults with the goal of providing a curriculum for teaching
them in the Sunday Schools of Bible-believing congregations. The ultimate goal of furthering the work of Christ through meeting their needs and helping them enlarge their service is especially important in these last days.
CHAPTER THREE

GENERAL NEEDS OF SENIOR ADULTS

In 1980 James Jorgensen published a best-selling book entitled Retirement and Why You Can’t Afford It: The Graying of America.1 The book had to do with choices facing those contemplating retirement in the post-war world, and was probably the first book to describe major changes in American society in the area of aging and retirement.

The continuing impact of this landmark book is shown by its being selected as one of the resources discussed in 1997 – seventeen years later – at a session conducted by the U. S. Senate Special Committee on Aging entitled, “Preparing for the Baby Boomers Retirement: The Role of Employment.”2 In Dallas Salisbury’s introductory remarks he said:

Individuals are being told through every medium that they should expect to live a long time. Medical advances are possible that could add many years to the life expectancy prospect. This information is complemented by constant media emphasis on the need to save and to plan for retirement. Whether it be financial columns, financial services industry advertisements, programs on retirement planning on public television, the Internet, financial planning software

---

1 James Jorgensen, Retirement and Why You Can’t Afford It: The Graying of America (New York: Dial Press, 1980)

on the PC, or payroll stuffers, the message that "your retirement depends on you" is everywhere. This has not been the case for any prior generation. It is likely to impact behavior, with many people deciding to work longer.³

Therefore a discussion of the sociological factors of aging and their effect on developing a curriculum of topics for teaching senior adults is especially important. The many changes impact, and will continue to impact, how senior adults should be taught in church and Sunday School.

A Sociological Perspective

The home page of the University of Denver’s Department of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences includes this definition of sociology:

Sociology is the scientific study of the structure and process of human societies and social interaction. The focus of sociological attention is groups, which influence what individuals do and how they see the world. Spanning a diverse terrain of topical areas, sociology includes the study of crime and delinquency, law, social stratification, social psychology, education, family, gender relations, race and ethnicity, work and occupations, sports and leisure, politics, aging, population trends, and religion, among others.⁴

As this definition makes clear, important aspects of sociology include "aging, population trends, and religion, and these are topics directly related to the project of this author.

To wade through the explosion of information on this subject in the last few years would be a daunting task, even though this author might be inclined to do so. Since

³ Ibid.

Jorgensen’s book in 1980 there has been a plethora of books, articles, radio and television reports, internet studies and web sites on the subjects of aging and retirement. On the internet, for example, through the Google search engine, on July 12, 2002, a search for information on “aging” produced 3,060,000 results; a search for “global aging” produced 2,110 results; and a search for “senior citizens” produced 674,000 results.\(^5\)

While there is an abundance of information available, with new data and ideas coming forth regularly, for this study it is necessary to deal with some basic statistics that reflect present-day characteristics of the older population. This data has been analyzed and compiled to show trends based on the 1990 and 2000 Census. The result is a snapshot of the state of affairs for American senior adults in 2002.

\(^5\) Internet; [http://www.google.com/search](http://www.google.com/search); accessed 12 July, 2002.
General Profile of Senior Citizens

Senior citizens – persons 65 years or older – numbered 35.0 million in 2000:

TABLE 1.

POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>60-64 years</th>
<th>65-74 years</th>
<th>75-84 years</th>
<th>85 yrs &amp; over</th>
<th>60 yrs &amp; over</th>
<th>65 yrs &amp; over</th>
<th>% 60+</th>
<th>% 65+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>281,421,906</td>
<td>10,805,447</td>
<td>18,390,986</td>
<td>12,361,180</td>
<td>4,239,587</td>
<td>45,797,200</td>
<td>34,991,753</td>
<td>16.3%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


(Also see Appendix One, Table 1., “Profile of Age Characteristics”).

They represented 12.4% of the U. S. population, about one in every eight Americans. The number of senior citizens increased by 3.7 million or 12% since 1990, compared to an increase of 13.3 % for the under-65 population. However, the number of Americans aged 45-65 – who will reach 65 over the next two decades – increased by 34% during this period.

In 2000, there were 20.6 million older women and 14.4 million older men, or a sex ratio of 143 women for every 100 men. The female to male sex ratio increases with age, ranging from 117 for the 65-69 age group to a high of 245 for persons 85 and over.

Since 1900, the percentage of Americans 65+ has more than tripled (4.1% in 1900 to 12.4% in 2000), and the number has increased eleven times (from 3.1 million to 35.0 million).6

6 Data for this section was taken from Internet releases of the U.S. Administration on Aging in their study, “A Profile of Older Americans,” http://www.aoa.dhhs.gov/aoa/STATS/profile/2001/2.html; Internet; accessed 15 January, 2002.
Senior citizens themselves are getting older.

In 2000, the 65-74 age group (18.4 million) was eight times larger than in 1900, but the 75-84 group (12.4 million) was 16 times larger and the 85+ group (4.2 million) was 34 times larger.

In 2000, persons reaching age 65 had an average life expectancy of an additional 17.9 years (19.2 years for females and 16.3 years for males).

A child born in 2000 could expect to live 76.9 years, about 29 years longer than a child born in 1900. Much of this increase occurred because of reduced death rates for children and young adults. However, the past two decades have also seen reduced death rates for the population aged 65-84, especially for men – by 19% for men aged 65-74 and by 16% for men aged 75-84. Life expectancy at age 65 increased by only 2.4 years between 1900 and 1960, but has increased by 3.7 years since 1960.

Over 2.0 million persons celebrated their 65th birthday in 2000 (5,574 per day). In the same year, about 1.8 million persons aged 65 or older died, resulting in a net increase of approximately 238,000 (650 per day).

There were 50,545 persons aged 100 or more in 2000 (0.02% of the total population. This is a 35% increase from the 1990 figure of 37,306.7

Health, Health Care, and Disability for Senior Citizens

In 2000 more than half of senior citizens (54.5%) reported having at least one disability of some type (physical or non-physical). Over a third (37.7%) reported at least one severe disability. Over 4.5 million (14.2%) had difficulty carrying out activities of daily living (ADLs) and 6.9 million (21.6%) reported difficulties with instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs). This is in sharp contrast to the much lower levels in the 25-64 populations of ADL difficulties (2.8%) and IADL difficulties (4%). (ADLs

---

7 Ibid.
include bathing, dressing, eating, and getting around the house. IADLs include preparing meals, shopping, managing money, using the telephone, doing housework, and taking medication).

The percentages with disabilities increase sharply with age:

FIGURE 1.
PERCENT WITH DISABILITIES, BY AGE


Disability takes a much heavier toll on the very old. Almost three-fourths (73.6%) of those aged 80+ report at least one disability. Over half (57.6%) of those aged
80+ had one or more severe disabilities and 34.9% of the 80+ population reported needing assistance as a result of disability. There is a strong relationship between disability status and reported health status. Among those 65+ with a severe disability, 68% reported their health as fair or poor. Presence of a severe disability is also associated with lower income levels and educational attainment.

Most senior citizens have at least one chronic condition and many have multiple conditions. The most frequently occurring conditions per 100 elderly in 1996 were: arthritis (49), hypertension (36), hearing impairments (30) heart disease (27), cataracts (17), orthopedic impairments (18), sinusitis (12), and diabetes (10).

Older people had about four times the number of days of hospitalization (1.6 days) as did the under 65 aged population (0.4 days) in 2000. The average length of a hospital stay was 6.0 days for older people, compared to only 4.1 days for people under 65. The average length of stay for older people has decreased 6 days since 1964. Older persons averaged more contacts with doctors in 2000 than did persons of all ages (6.8 contacts vs. 3.5 contacts).

In 2000, older consumers averaged $3,019 in out-of-pocket health expenditures, an increase of more than a third since 1990. In contrast, the total population spent considerably less, averaging $1,959 in out-of-pocket health expenditures. Older Americans spent 11% of their total expenditures on health, more than twice the proportion spent by all consumers (5%). Health costs incurred on average by older
consumers in 2000 consisted of $1,554 (51%) for insurance, $706 (23%) for drugs, $601 (21%) for medical services, and $158 (5%) for medical supplies. ⁸

Educational Levels for Senior Citizens

The educational level of the older population is increasing. Between 1970 and 2000, the percentage who had completed high school rose from 28% to 70%. About 16% in 2000 had a bachelor's degree or more. The percentage who had completed high school varied considerably by race and ethnic origin among older persons in 2000: 74% of Whites, 63% of Asians and Pacific Islanders, 46% of African-Americans, and 37% of Hispanics. ⁹

---


Future Growth of the Older Population

The older population will continue to grow significantly in the future:

**FIGURE 2.**

**POPULATION GROWTH PROJECTIONS**

![Figure 1: Number of Persons 65+, 1900 - 2030 (numbers in millions)]

This growth slowed somewhat during the 1990’s because of the relatively small number of babies born during the Great Depression of the 1930’s. But the older population will burgeon between the years 2010 and 2030 when the “baby boom” generation reaches age 65.
By 2030, there will be about 70 million senior citizens, more than twice their number in 2000. People 65+ represented 12.4% of the population in the year 2000, but are expected to grow to be about 20% of the population by 2030.¹⁰

Jorgensen suggested in his 1980 book that “in less than 20 years it may be financially impossible for anyone to retire.”¹¹ Commenting on this fewer than 20 years later (1997) Salisbury said, “Jorgensen was a bit too pessimistic, it would now seem, but his analysis of the implications of the growing aged population is nonetheless compelling.”¹² Now, five years later, it may be that Jorgensen was more correct than many would like to admit.

Current Information

The ongoing debate in the United States Congress over the stability of the Social Security system continues to put the spotlight on the whole matter of aging and retirement, and thus on the implications of the author’s current project. In a recent nationally-distributed newspaper story Christine Dugas reports, “Already, nearly half those saving for retirement, 46%, say they will have to postpone retirement.”¹³ She based her story on a USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup poll conducted July 5-8, 2002.

---


¹¹ Jorgensen, 36.


Dugas continues,

'More than one-third of adults say they have no money saved in any kind of retirement account, according to the poll. The retirement system just isn’t working for a lot of Americans. Many don’t have access to a pension or retirement savings plan at work. Others choose not to join their 401(k) plan or get a late start and don’t contribute enough. Workers often don’t know much about investing and don’t care to learn, often letting their portfolios languish in overly conservative investments or going overboard on company stock. The prognosis is grim, especially for middle-class families.'

Individuals reaching age 65 today face a drastically different world than their parents faced. The days of an individual working for one company and retiring at age 62 or 65 on a company pension supplemented by Social Security benefits are a thing of the past.

Dugas further reports:

As the Social Security system has come under stress, the private pension system also has been radically transformed. Companies shifted away from traditional pension plans, which guaranteed benefits to retirees for as long as they lived. Instead, most offer “defined-contribution” plans, such as 401(k)s. They put the burden on workers to sign up, contribute and decide how to invest. As an incentive, many employers offer matching contributions.

But companies on average contribute only 2% of pay to 401(k) type plans, compared with 6% to 7% of pay that they typically contributed to traditional retirement plans, says Brooks Hamilton, a retirement plan consultant in Dallas.

Even if Social Security survives its challenges, the benefits are gradually declining. In 1990, Social Security benefits replaced 43.2% of the pre-retirement income of the average worker. That will slip to 36.7% by 2030.

---

14 Ibid., 1-2.
15 Ibid.
A recent best-selling book on this subject adds additional perspective to the discussion of aging and retirement. In *Gray Dawn: How the Coming Age Wave Will Transform America – and the World*, Peter G. Peterson deals with what he calls “global aging.” As the Chairman of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Institute for International Economics, he is qualified to warn of the challenges immediately ahead:

In today’s developed world, people aged 65 and over represent 14 percent of the total population. That share will almost double by 2030. In the United States, the 85-and-over set will more than triple. And fertility rates are so low in many developed nations that populations may actually fall to half of today’s size before the end of the next century, causing a huge imbalance between the young and the old.

As populations age and decline, will economies decline as well? Will youth remain apathetic in the face of the unthinkable tax bills they will soon be paying, or does generational war loom in our future? What happens as medical progress inevitably confronts increasingly scarce resources? Who lives? Who dies? Who decides? And if older developed countries try to depend on the savings of younger developing countries, how will this change the global balance of power?\(^{16}\)

By reiterating key statistics reflecting projected future growth of the senior adult population and factoring in a potential drop in fertility rates around the world, Peterson highlights the phenomenon he calls global aging. While the present study focuses on the senior adult population in the United States of America, and more specifically in central Virginia, the sociological impact of this global probability is important to the conclusions drawn, and merits at least some mention.

Peterson continues:

By the year 2040 in the United States, for example, the Census Bureau projects that the population aged 65 to 74 will grow by roughly 80 percent—but the 85-and-over age group will grow by 240 percent. Over the long run, the growth multiples for this “old old” population are phenomenal. In 1900, U.S. residents aged 85 and over numbered a mere 374,000. Today, they number nearly 4 million, and by 2040 they will exceed 13 million. That same year, Americans aged 80 and over are projected to outnumber all American children under age 5. At the very oldest ages, the multiples soar. Centenarians are projected to grow from 63,000 to over 834,000 between now and 2050, a thirteen-fold increase over the next fifty years.¹⁷

Extreme age no longer surprises. In Japan, a 100 year old woman was ticketed for riding a motorcycle without a helmet. Her excuse—that her 79-year-old son, the driver, was wearing her helmet—failed to mollify the police. In 1986, upon the death of Japan’s Shigechigo Izumi at age 120, the Guinness Book of World Records announced that the title of the world’s oldest person shifted to France’s Jeanne Louise Clement, who was born in 1875 and remembered meeting Vincent Van Gogh as a teenager. After Mrs. Clement died in 1997 at age 122, so many other supercentenarians have claimed the title that no one under age 110 any longer merits consideration.¹⁸

The prospect of global aging, then, will be added to the profile of senior adults being constructed for the present study. This profile now includes general population statistics, health, health care and disability information, educational levels, future growth, retirement, and global aging. At this point the results of a recent survey will be added.

¹⁷ Ibid., 42.
¹⁸ Ibid., 45.
Aging Needs Assessment

The Central Virginia Agency on Aging (CVAA) often conducts an area-wide survey of agencies serving senior citizens to determine their most pressing needs. The agency covers the counties of Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, and Campbell, and the cities of Bedford and Lynchburg, with a combined senior adult population of 31,458 in 2000. In the survey the procedure is to ask the employees of these agencies to identify what, in their experience, are the top five concerns of the senior adults in the area.

The survey obtained for this project was conducted in August of 2000, and reflected responses from 155 individuals. The questionnaire asked, “Of the services/concerns listed, what are the five most important?” The 21 choices were:

1. Health & Fitness opportunities
2. Socialization & recreation opportunities
3. Volunteer opportunities
4. Education activities
5. Preventive health services/education
6. Affordable housing
7. Caregiver groups, info & training
8. Information & referral
9. Counseling re: finance, insurance
10. Tax preparation help
11. Legal assistance
12. Emergency financial assistance
13. Transportation
14. Monitoring quality of care
15. Companionship & light housekeeping
16. Assistance in signing up for services
17. Registry of workers to hire for help
18. Coordination of community services
19. Minor home repairs for low income
20. Checks on isolated elders
21. Adult day care & respite
The results of the survey are as follows:

**TABLE 2. AGING NEEDS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank of responses:</th>
<th>Priority:</th>
<th>Number of Responses:</th>
<th>Percent:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number One Concern:</td>
<td>Emergency financial assistance</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Two Concern:</td>
<td>Preventive health services/education</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Three Concern:</td>
<td>Nutritious meal programs</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Four Concern:</td>
<td>Affordable housing</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>31.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Five Concern:</td>
<td>Checks on isolated elders</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Companionship/light housekeeping</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Central Virginia Agency on Aging, August 2000*

It must be noted that in a poll such as this, the results should vary depending on the time and location of the survey taken. At the time this survey was taken, the respondents were the professionals who worked regularly with senior adults in the geographical area indicated. They would be expected to know what were the current most important needs and concerns of those citizens, based on their day-to-day experience.

The survey shows, among other things, that a large percentage of the senior adult population is concerned with personal economic and personal health needs. This corresponds to the statistical information in this study, which has already shown that
senior adults are facing a changing economic challenge related to prospects of retirement, and that half of them have reported having at least one disability of some sort.

By putting this "snapshot" together with the other information gathered in the process of this study, some conclusions can be drawn concerning senior adults in general. This group, aged 65 and over, make up an important part of American society, and their contributions and needs, both now and in the future, will concern not only all Americans, but also the population of the entire world.

Summary

Robert Fillinger, in his section of the Christian Educator's Handbook on Adult Education, offers a fitting summary for the current study:

The American Association of Retired Persons speaks of the aging of the world’s population as "a social phenomenon without historical precedent." The statistics which substantiate this "phenomenon" are quite dramatic, but for us who work with the elderly, these numbers also form part of the mandate not to ignore or underestimate this significant segment of our society. For example, the median age in the United States has soared past thirty-two and persons over sixty-five now outnumber teenagers.

Ken Dychtwald points out in his book that "two-thirds of all the men and women who have lived beyond the age of 65 in the entire history of the world are alive today." The author speaks of three demographic phenomena: the senior boom; the birth dearth; and the aging of the Baby Boom, which by 2050 will produce a population of 67.4 million persons over sixty-five (21.8 percent of the population).

Fillinger continues:

---


21 Ibid., 4-9, in Gangel and Wilhoit, 224.
The teacher of adults can hardly afford to ignore these differences depicting the older person as an adult who has merely lived longer than other adults. Older adults, while similar in many respects to other adults, have age-related needs and characteristics which make them unique. When we respond to these differences and interact with them, more effective teaching of senior adults often results.

Other factors affect our ministry with older adults. Persons over sixty-five in our society are healthier, have more formal education, are more active (many of them prefer not to retire), and will live longer than the elderly of earlier generations. Other things might be noted. For example, older persons are more political and issue-oriented than ever before. Teachers of older persons must recognize that all these factors impinge (directly or indirectly) on the teaching-learning experience. Knowledge of these matters increases our ability to work effectively with older persons in the community of faith. They are, so to speak, prerequisites for the teacher of senior adults.\textsuperscript{22}

This study thus far has included general profile statistics, statistics on health, health care and disability, educational levels, future growth, retirement, and global aging; and one survey of local professionals who work with senior citizens. The information gathered helps to present the general needs of senior adults, people who have been analyzed by others, but people who also need to be heard regarding their own needs and preferences. That will constitute the next section of the current study.

\textsuperscript{22} Gangel and Wilhoit, 223-224.
CHAPTER FOUR

EXPRESSED NEEDS OF SENIOR ADULTS

In order to determine the needs and preferences of senior adults regarding Sunday School teaching, a survey was conducted by the writer in the weeks following September 5, 2001. Questionnaires were sent to 502 individuals associated with the 50 Plus Ministry, sponsored by Thomas Road Baptist Church. The late Dr. Norm Hedding founded the ministry, formerly known as Senior Saints, in April, 1974. The organization, now directed by Rev. Roy Newman, ministers to individuals affiliated with several local churches in the area, providing inspiration, fellowship, and various services to older Christians.

The Questionnaire: Rationale and Description

The questionnaire used for the survey is in Appendix Two. It consists of two parts. First, a survey of current pressing concerns of older Christians is patterned after the “Aging Needs Assessment” in Chapter Three, in which 155 professionals who worked with senior citizens were polled. It was decided that doing this would result in a certain degree of correlation between the needs of senior citizens in general and the needs of older Christians in similar categories.
A comparison of the "Aging Needs Assessment" and the first part of the questionnaire of this project demonstrates how the two are related:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>&quot;Aging Needs Assessment&quot;</th>
<th>50 Plus Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Health &amp; Fitness opportunities</td>
<td>1. Health &amp; fitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Socialization &amp; recreation oppor.</td>
<td>2. Socialization &amp; recreation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Volunteer opportunities</td>
<td>3. Volunteer opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Education activities</td>
<td>4. Education opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Preventive health services/educ.</td>
<td>6. Preventive health information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Affordable housing</td>
<td>7. Caregiver groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Caregiver groups, info., training</td>
<td>11. Financial counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Information &amp; referral</td>
<td>8. Emergency financial assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Tax preparation help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Legal assistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Emergency financial assistance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Transportation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Monitoring quality of care</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Companionship &amp; light housekpng</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Assistance in signing up for svcs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Registry of workers to hire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Coordination of comm. Services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Minor home repairs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Checks on isolated elders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Adult day care &amp; respite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some categories, such as personal counseling and children/grandchildren/great-grandchildren, are included in the survey of older Christians but not used in the general "Aging Needs Assessment" conducted by the Central Virginia Agency on Aging. At the same time, several categories, usually social services in nature, are included in the "Aging Needs Assessment,” but not used in the 50 Plus survey. It should be remembered that the purpose is not to show exact similarity between the two, but merely correlation.
The second part of the questionnaire consisted of asking respondents to rank the types of teaching methods/techniques preferred in Sunday School teaching, and the subject matter of teaching preferred in Sunday School. While the types of teaching methods/techniques is only incidental to this study, the subject matter preferred by the various age groups is critical, and will be considered carefully.

The results of the survey along with an analysis thereof form the foundation of this project. Upon that foundation will be constructed a curriculum for use in teaching senior adults in Sunday School.

Analysis of the Survey Results

502 questionnaires were mailed out, and 159 responses were received, a 31.8 per cent return. It should be noted that the majority of the surveys went to married individuals, and in almost all cases if a response was received from one spouse the other responded also.

Of the responses, 8 were invalid, meaning their questionnaire was mostly incomplete or filled out incorrectly. The remaining 148 were counted in the totals and the percentages shown here.¹

Ages 55-65: A Reference Point

Because the 50 Plus constituents include people as young as 50 years, the writer’s survey has 32 respondents who marked their questionnaires as being between the ages of

¹ Number of responses and percentages reported in the surveys do not add up to 100% because the survey recipients were asked to rank the categories first choice, second choice, third choice, etc. The calculations were based on the percentage of the whole group who marked the first choice, the second choice, and so on.
55 and 65. Rather than take these responses out of the survey results, it was decided to include them in order to have a point of reference in comparing the age groups over 65.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3. SURVEY RESULTS FOR AGES 55-65 (32 RESPONDENTS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Top three concerns:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 1: Health and fitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 2: Children/grandchildren/great-grandchildren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3: Preventive health information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of teaching preferred:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 1: Lecture with fill-in-the-blanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 2: Lecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3: Lecture with discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject matter preferred:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 1: New Testament book studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 2: Practical Christian living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3: Bible prophecy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This age group, not yet considered to be “senior citizens,” nonetheless is eligible for membership in organizations such as 50 Plus and AARP (American Association of Retired Persons). As the latter name implies, this group is made up of people of retirement age, even though many in this age group are not yet retired.

Not much about the responses of those in the 55-65 age group is surprising... Throughout the survey preferences will shift around from age group to age group, but
generally remain consistent. The few changes will be noted, and possible reasons suggested. About the only noticeable item is in the types of teaching preferred: this is the only group that ranked “lecture with fill-in-the-blanks” as number one. In the next age group, 65-75, this is ranked third, and is not in the top three in the 75-85 or over 85 groups.

It may very well be that this reflects the backgrounds and educational levels of the various age groups, and as this group of older Christians grows older they will maintain this preference. It has been suggested that this may be due to the fact that in the large Pastor’s Bible Class (the Auditorium Class at Thomas Road Baptist Church) lesson sheets with fill-in-the-blanks are commonly used.
Ages 65-75: Young Seniors

The first group legitimately considered to be in the category of senior citizens enjoys the prospect of living longer on average than their parents. According to statistics included in this study, they are better educated, healthier, and will work longer than those in their age category in the past.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4. SURVEY RESULTS FOR AGES 65-75 (56 RESPONDENTS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Top three concerns:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># 1: Children/grandchildren/great-grandchildren</th>
<th>37 responses</th>
<th>66%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 2: Health and fitness</td>
<td>36 responses</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3: Preventive health information</td>
<td>24 responses</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Type of teaching preferred:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># 1: Lecture with discussion</th>
<th>18 responses</th>
<th>32%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 2: Lecture</td>
<td>17 responses</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3: Lecture with fill-in-the-blanks</td>
<td>11 responses</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subject matter preferred:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># 1: Practical Christian living</th>
<th>20 responses</th>
<th>36.7%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 2: New Testament book studies</td>
<td>16 responses</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3: Bible prophecy</td>
<td>11 responses</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that this is the only group in the survey to rank “children/grandchildren/great-grandchildren” their number one concern. These seniors are generally enjoying their grandchildren while they are younger, and probably are
participating in their schooling and upbringing. No doubt pride in their children, and the desire to see them succeed in life is high, resulting in their devoting considerable time and effort on their behalf.

They, like all the older age groups in the survey, are concerned about their health. It is likely they have already had health problems, and seek to prevent further problems and find ways to improve themselves in this regard. Concern about future challenges is probably growing.

Additionally, this is the only age group in the survey to rank “practical Christian living” as number one in subject matter preferred. Is this because of the greater responsibility they feel for their family? Is it because they more than ever need to translate their faith and belief into day-to-day real living? Probably so. In any case it is probably an indication of many things being “close to home” at this point in their lives.
Ages 75-85: Growing Older

Age is beginning to take its toll on this group of seniors. It is likely that one spouse has died. In any case physical challenges are greater, and needs are changing.

---

**TABLE 5. SURVEY RESULTS**

**FOR AGES 75-85 (47 RESPONDENTS)**

---

**Top three concerns:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># 1:</th>
<th>33 responses</th>
<th>70.5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 2:</td>
<td>20 responses</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3: Children/grandchildren/great-grandchildren</td>
<td>19 responses</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Type of teaching preferred:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># 1: Lecture with discussion</th>
<th>19 responses</th>
<th>40.5%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 2: Lecture</td>
<td>12 responses</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3: Lecture with question and answer</td>
<td>12 responses</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subject matter preferred:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># 1: New Testament book studies</th>
<th>14 responses</th>
<th>36%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 2: Practical Christian living</td>
<td>13 responses</td>
<td>28.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3: Bible prophecy</td>
<td>10 responses</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

A very noticeable shift occurs in the top three concerns, where “companionship” is an important matter for those in the 75 to 85 age group. This undoubtedly reflects the loss of a spouse and the changes in lifestyle that results. It may be that, while children/grandchildren/great-grandchildren are still a concern, they are busy with their
own lives and are not as much of a part of the lives of their parents or grandparents as they once were.

The type of teaching preferred shows a slight shift, reflecting the fact that those in this age group like to discuss the lesson and have opinions to contribute. The subject matter preferred reflects the majority of all those over 65 as will be noted later.
Ages 85 and over: “The Golden Years”

Peterson pointed out previously that the Census Bureau “projects that the population aged 65-74 will grow by roughly 80 percent (by the year 2040) – but the 85-and-over age group will grow by 240 percent.”

They are already enjoying longer lives, but many are concerned about the quality of their lives. Children and grandchildren are concerned about them also, and the planning for their eventual care is shared by both.

At the same time these older senior citizens want to maintain their independence and well-being as long as they can. Some are able to do so, others are not.

---

**TABLE 6. SURVEY RESULTS**

**FOR AGES 85 AND OVER (13 RESPONDENTS)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top three concerns:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 1: Health and fitness</td>
<td>9 responses</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 2: Preventive health information</td>
<td>8 responses</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3: Companionship</td>
<td>6 responses</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Type of teaching preferred:**

| # 1: Lecture | 5 responses | 40% |
| # 2: Lecture with discussion | 4 responses | 31% |
| # 3: Discussion groups | 3 responses | 21.5% |

**Subject matter preferred:**

| # 1: New Testament book studies | 8 responses | 62% |
| # 2: Old Testament book studies | 4 responses | 31% |
| # 3: Practical Christian living | 4 responses | 31% |

---

2 Peterson, 42.
Overall Results for Ages 65 and Over

While the different age groups in the current study – ages 65-75, ages 75-85, ages 85 and over – reflect important distinctiveness each in their own way, the centerpiece of the survey is the overall results for all those over 65.

### TABLE 7. OVERALL RESULTS
FOR THOSE AGED 65 AND OVER (116 RESPONDENTS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top three concerns:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 1: Health and fitness</td>
<td>70 responses</td>
<td>81.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 2: Children/grandchildren/great-grandchildren</td>
<td>56 responses</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3: Preventive health information</td>
<td>26 responses</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of teaching preferred:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 1: Lecture with discussion</td>
<td>41 responses</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 2: Lecture</td>
<td>34 responses</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3: Lecture with question and answer</td>
<td>12 responses</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject matter preferred:</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># 1: New Testament book studies</td>
<td>38 responses</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 2: Practical Christian living</td>
<td>37 responses</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3: Bible prophecy</td>
<td>21 responses</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most overwhelming response in the entire survey is the 81.2% who said that health and fitness were the things about which they were most concerned. The number three response indicated preventive health information as an important consideration. This means that the vast majority of these individuals are greatly concerned about their
health. The fact that these are Christian senior adults does not detract from the impact of these revelations. The Bible clearly states, "Know ye not that ye (Christian individuals) are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16). These older Christians, if they are striving to live a well-balanced life, will have just as much concern for their physical bodies as they will be for lost souls and fulfilling the Great Commission.

Almost half of all those over 65 marked "lecture with discussion" as the preferred teaching method/technique. While not a concern of this project, teachers of senior adults and pastors and Sunday School superintendencies will take note of this preference in their planning.

The subject matter preferred by those over 65 is probably not that unusual: New Testament book studies, practical Christian living, and Bible prophecy. But when that is factored in along with their general needs and their expressed needs and preferences, one can begin to think about a Sunday School curriculum for this age group.
Summary

Charles Sell has written extensively about Christian education to adults. He suggests that in order to understand what happens in the life of an adult who is undergoing change one must look farther back:

Aging actually begins in the thirties. Before a person is through the young adult period, he will feel the physical effects of getting older. Thus, in some sense, the process of preparing for old age begins long before the sixty-to-sixty-five time frame. Some believe there is a preparatory process that lasts a long time, probably beginning in the mid-thirties. Traumatic events like a relative’s or friend’s serious illness or death might stir the person’s thinking about mortality. He experiences an engagement-disengagement pattern. One undergoes the process of relating, becoming intimate, and then tolerating loss and grief. That pattern will be repeated often in old age.3

The task facing the Christian educator who works with older Christians more and more requires special preparation and focused attention. The study undertaken by this writer is intended to assist with that task. But before a five year curriculum of topics can be constructed, a study of basic principles of curriculum design must be made. That constitutes the next section.

3 Charles M. Sell, Transitions Through Adult Life (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 208.
CHAPTER FIVE

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CURRICULUM DESIGN

Introduction

A word that many people have in their vocabulary and often use freely is not as simple a concept as it appears to be. “Gaius Julius Caesar and his cohorts of the first century B.C. had no idea that the oval track upon which the Roman chariots raced would bequeath a word used almost daily by educators twenty-one centuries later. The track—the curriculum—has become one of the key concerns of today’s schools, and its meaning has expanded from a tangible racecourse to an abstract concept.”

Oliva goes on to say,

Though it may be vehemently denied, no one has ever seen a curriculum, not a real, total, tangible, visible entity called a curriculum. The interested observer may have seen a written plan that may have been called a curriculum. Somehow the observer knows, probably by word of mouth, that in every school in which teachers are instructing students a curriculum exists. A written plan provides the observer with an additional clue to the existence of a certain something called a curriculum. But if by some bit of magic the observer could lift the roof of a school in session and examine the cross section thereof, the curriculum would not be apparent. What the observer would immediately perceive would be many instances of teacher-pupil interaction we call instruction.

---


2 Ibid., 2.
While the professional educators justifiably need to dig deeper into the nuances of the concept, for the purposes of this study a clear definition of a curriculum is needed.

Oliva offers this from a *Dictionary of Education*: (a curriculum is) "a systematic group of courses or sequences of subjects required for graduation or certification in a field of study, for example, social studies curriculum, physical education curriculum." Even simpler, "We define curriculum as a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities for persons to be educated."

In the realm of church education Colson and Rigdon say that “curriculum exists only where true learning experiences take place. Accordingly, a church’s curriculum may be thought of as the sum of all learning experiences resulting from a curriculum plan used under church guidance and directed toward attaining a church’s objective.”

Lois E. LeBar, in her section of Hakes’ work adds:

The curriculum of Christian Education may be defined as the specific plans of a church agency for accomplishing its aims, or as the activities of teachers and pupils in relation to Scripture for the purpose of leading pupils toward maturity in Christ.

Literally a racecourse, the curriculum of the past has often been conceived as the content covered by pupils with little attention paid to their needs and interests. Recently some curricula have veered to the other extreme of conceiving the course to be the activities of students as they run, allowing their choices and interests to determine the process and the goal. In the former concept we

---


visualize the pupils goaded by teachers to sprint straight toward the prescribed goal over a narrow track that is clearly laid out for them. In the latter we see the pupils strolling through wide fields, stopping to study the flowers and birds that interest them.

An authentic curriculum of Christian education incorporates insights from both these extremes. A curriculum is not Christian unless it involves interaction from the Word of God; it is not educational unless this interaction results in spiritual growth for the pupil.\(^6\)

But what about instruction? Where does this fit in the overall picture of the educational process? In his book, after discussing such things as dualistic models, interlocking models, concentric models and cyclical models to explain the relationship of curriculum and instruction, Oliva concluded:

As newer developments occur in education, as research adds new insights on teaching and learning, as new ideas are developed, and as times change, beliefs about curriculum and instruction also undergo transformation. The “rightness” or “wrongness” of concepts like curriculum and instruction cannot be established by an individual educator or even by a group of educators. One index of “correctness” might be the prevailing opinion of most educators at a particular stage in history—a rather pragmatic but nevertheless viable and defensible position. Though no one to my knowledge has made a count of prevailing postulates regarding curriculum and instruction, most theoreticians today appear to agree with the following comments:

- Curriculum and instruction are related but different.
- Curriculum and instruction are interlocking and interdependent.
- Curriculum and instruction may be studied and analyzed as separate entities but cannot function in mutual isolation.\(^7\)

Oliva gives additional clarification when he describes “curriculum as that which is taught and instruction as the means used to teach that which is taught. Even more

---


7 Oliva, 11.
simply, curriculum can be conceived as the ‘what’ and instruction as the ‘how.’ We may think of the curriculum as a program, a plan, content, and learning experiences, whereas we may characterize instruction as methods, the teaching act, implementation and presentation.\(^8\)

In his chapter on “Principles of Curriculum Development” Oliva presents ten axioms for curriculum development:

- Curriculum change is inevitable and desirable.
- The curriculum is a product of its time.
- Curriculum changes of earlier periods often coexist and overlap curriculum changes of later periods.
- Curriculum change results only as people change.
- Curriculum change is a cooperative group activity.
- Curriculum development is basically a process of making choices from among alternatives.
- Curriculum development never ends.
- Curriculum development is more effective if it is a comprehensive, not piecemeal, process.
- Curriculum development is more effective when it follows a systematic plan.
- Curriculum development starts from where the curriculum is.

Both teachers and curriculum specialists fill roles as curriculum workers in cooperation with other school personnel. Teachers, curriculum specialists, supervisors, administrators, students, parents, and other community representatives can all play significant roles in effecting curriculum change. Curriculum developers start from the given and work within specific parameters. Ordinarily, change is relatively slow, limited, and gradual.\(^9\)

Because curriculum and instruction are so closely related, it becomes necessary to recall, for the purpose of this study, the statement of scope and limitations in chapter one:

“Finally, the project is not concerned with teaching methods or other means of

\(^8\) Ibid., 8.

\(^9\) Ibid., 41.
presentation, but rather with topics that meet the needs and interests of senior adults.” Therefore, while it is difficult to focus on “curriculum” as described above without touching on methodology, this writer will endeavor to do so.

This basic introduction to the terminology related to curriculum development provides a foundation for an expression of principles for developing a curriculum of topics for teaching senior adults in a Sunday School program. These principles represent the bringing together of viewpoints of both secular and Christian education as has been done so far in this chapter.

**The Church Objective**

In order to have a starting point for a proposed curriculum for Sunday School or church school, it was determined that the basic model suggested by Colson and Rigdon would serve the purpose very well. Even though it is not a more current work, it nonetheless states the basic requirements in a clear, concise manner. Furthermore because this model represents work done in Southern Baptist circles, as well as being an outgrowth of the well-known Cooperative Curriculum Project, it fits well with the project of this writer.

The model suggested is described by Colson and Rigdon:

The organizing principle for the Southern Baptist Curriculum Plan is the involvement of learners in a meaningful exploration of the realities of the Christian faith and life in such a way that they move toward attaining the educational objective. This is done in the context of the church’s life and work.

---

10 An influential four-year study conducted from 1960-1964 by more than one hundred curriculum specialists from sixteen denominations, on the question “What kind of curriculum is needed by our churches in the task of Christian education?” reported in *The Church’s Educational Ministry: A Curriculum Plan.*
It will be seen that this organizing principle reflects the following elements of curriculum design:

1. The educational objective ("in such a way that they move toward attaining the educational objective").
2. The scope ("the realities of the Christian faith and life").
3. The context ("this is done in the context of the church's life and work").
4. Methodology ("the involvement of learners in a meaningful exploration.").

Inherent in the methodology theory are . . . (1) the lifelong learning task—"the involvement of learners," and (2) age-level activities ("meaningful exploration."

Earlier in their book Colson and Rigdon stated that "a church's curriculum may be thought of as the sum of all learning experiences resulting from a curriculum plan used under church guidance and directed toward attaining a church's objective." Therefore the first item to be determined in this plan is "a church's objective."

The church is Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, where this writer teaches the Steadfast Bible Class, one of sixteen adult classes, and one of two ministering primarily to senior citizens. While teachers of each adult class meet regularly with the Executive Pastor and work together toward common goals, none uses a prescribed curriculum. Nonetheless, being in a large church that, among other things, is responsible for the founding of Liberty University, the teaching meets the high expectations of the congregation.

---

11 Colson and Rigdon, 52.

12 Ibid., 38.
Thomas Road Baptist Church is an independent Baptist church that participates in the fellowship and work of the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia, and of the Southern Baptist Convention in general. Currently the church shares the same general goals and objectives as those denominational entities, although throughout most of its 46-year history it has been primarily an independent congregation.

The church’s mission statement is, “To glorify God through proclaiming the gospel and promoting spiritual growth in people from Central Virginia to the world.” Translated into an objective it would read, “That our membership may glorify God through the proclamation of the gospel and the promotion of spiritual growth in people from Central Virginia to all the world.” This is consistent with the prevailing image of Thomas Road Baptist Church as a strong evangelistic congregation.

In the basic curriculum design of the Southern Baptist Convention is this expanded statement of a church’s objective:

The objective of a church, composed of baptized believers who share a personal commitment to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, is to be through the power of the Holy Spirit a redemptive body in Christ, growing toward Christian maturity through worship, witness, education, and ministry, proclaiming the gospel to the whole world, and applying Christian principles to man and society that God’s purposes may be achieved.

One of the necessary elements in curriculum design is that it be “directed toward attaining a church’s objective.” To that must be added the educational objective.

---

13 From the *Thomas Road Baptist Church Ministry Manual*, 2000, 2.

14 Colson and Rigdon, 156.

15 Ibid., 38.
The Educational Objective

Again in Colson and Rigdon is found a good example of a statement of the educational objective:

To help persons become aware of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, respond to him in a personal commitment of faith, strive to follow him in the full meaning of discipleship, relate effectively to his church and its mission in the world, live in conscious recognition of the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, and grow toward Christian maturity.\(^{16}\)

In a church setting, and specifically a Sunday School setting, the educational objective becomes a statement that provides direction and perspective for the entire educational ministry. In the case of Thomas Road Baptist Church, the only printed statements have to do with the ministry model:

TRBC’s ministry model (1 Peter 5:1-4) is:

1. not a \textit{curriculum} model,
2. nor a \textit{program} model,
3. but a \textit{shepherding} model. This model combines the positive elements of the curriculum and program models and takes them to a deeper level. Jesus’ example is \textit{life transference} (Mark 10:45; John 10:10-11; 1 Thessalonians 2:8).\(^{17}\)

To state that Thomas Road Baptist Church is not following a “curriculum model” but rather a “shepherding model,” simply means that the church is in step with many modern-day evangelistic churches in believing that every Sunday School teacher is a shepherd and an extension of the pastor. The President of the Southern Baptist

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 156.

\(^{17}\) \textit{Thomas Road Baptist Church Ministry Manual}, 3.
Convention at the time of this writing taught this to students at Liberty University and Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in 1995.\textsuperscript{18}

Another statement having to do with the educational objective is that "The product of our ministry is spiritually maturing people,"\textsuperscript{19} implying that the objective is to produce people who are focused on intimacy with God and being conformed to the image of Christ. Of course the overall educational objective of Thomas Road Baptist Church grows out of the Great Commission, Matthew 28:18-20: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

Add to that the educational objective expressed in Ephesians 4:11-12: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." The objective of God's gifts to the church is that the church be found "teaching them (disciples) to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20a). The "perfecting of the saints" (adult Christian education) is done so that "the work of the ministry" and the "edifying of the body of Christ" might be accomplished. While evangelistic churches such as Thomas Road Baptist Church may

\textsuperscript{18} Jack Graham, "Revitalizing Your Sunday School," (lecture delivered at Liberty University on 2 October, 1995), CHMN 497 Seminar: Leadership Summit on the Sunday School, 41.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
not work to put these things in writing the way others may do, they nonetheless work
hard to put those Scriptural objectives into practice.

In the Cooperative Curriculum Project in which Colson and Rigdon participated,
the following functions of the educational objective are stated:

1. To chart the direction in which the educational experiences should be planned.
   These experiences when planned and organized under guidance constitute the
curriculum. Every component of the curriculum . . . is brought into focus by
the objective.

2. To serve as a standard or measure by which the short-term goals, the ways and
   means employed in the curriculum, and the resources which implement the
   curriculum, may be planned. The Objective is functioning in this way when
   planners at each level of curriculum development (interdenominational and
denominational) on both national and local levels, ask such questions as: Is
this statement of scope comprehensive enough to make possible the working
out of the objective? Is this educational method in harmony with the
objective?

3. To serve as a means of evaluation of the curriculum. The objective also
   serves indirectly when educational experiences in the church are being
   evaluated in the light of short-term goals consistent with the objective.\(^{20}\)

Item number one states that “these experiences when planned and organized
under guidance constitute the curriculum.”\(^{21}\) If the goal of the project of this writer is to
present a statement that expresses planned and organized learning experiences which
meet the needs and interests of senior adults, fulfilling that statement will complete this
study. Before that goal can be reached, however, the scope of the curriculum must be
determined.

\(^{20}\) The Church’s Educational Ministry: A Curriculum Plan (St. Louis: Bethany Press, 1966),
8, 9.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
The Scope of the Curriculum

Scope in relation to curriculum answers the question, "What does curriculum include." Colson and Rigdon continue, "The scope of Christian education, rightly considered, has the Bible for its basis." To some that may a "given" but considering the struggles of mainline denominations with concepts such as the social gospel it must be stated clearly. Evangelical, Bible-believing pastors and teachers are always concerned that there be no doubt about their belief that God's inerrant revelation to man is in its entirety contained in the Holy Scripture—"from cover to cover" as many say.

Beyond the fact that "what's in the Bible is within the scope" of the curriculum of the church, some clarification and delineation is necessary, otherwise its curriculum could never have focus on such things as age level, needs and interests, etc. Colson and Rigdon clarify:

One of the dictionary definitions of scope is "the range within which an activity displays itself." The scope of curriculum is that which is appropriate to be dealt with in the curriculum. It is more than subject matter. It includes subject matter, of course, but it really means subject matter in relation to experience.

Although the Bible is the basis and starting point of all Christian education curriculum, scope, as defined, is everything that is appropriate to be dealt with in the curriculum. This means that the scope is not only as broad as the gospel but as broad as human experience.

This is dealt with more definitively in the Cooperative Curriculum Project:

After long consideration the group adopted a viewpoint which is reflected in the following statement: "The term 'scope of curriculum' is used to describe what is appropriate to be dealt with in the curriculum. It is distinctive from the term

---

22 Colson and Rigdon, 46.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.
‘content of curriculum’ in that this latter term has to do with what is in fact dealt with in the curriculum. ‘Scope’ is the broader term; it refers to what may be dealt with; it includes more than can possibly be used in the curriculum. ‘Content’ is the narrower term; it refers to what is to be dealt with. Scope may be said to describe the field over which the church has legitimate purview for its educational ministry and from which the church may appropriately draw the content for its curriculum.25

How is this explanation applied to the question at hand? The members of the project identified the following elements of the scope for the curriculum:

The Christian experience of man under God—the divine dimension of reality in light of the gospel

The Christian experience of man’s relation to man—the human dimension of reality in light of the gospel

The Christian experience of man within the world—the natural dimension of reality in light of the gospel 26

Commenting on this, Colson and Rigdon say:

Here three elements of scope are identified. Actually, the preliminary study group identified four: God, man, nature, and history. These are the dimensions of human experience (the divine, the human, the natural, and the historical) and all of these are included in the scope of Christian education curriculum.

There is, however, another factor which must not be overlooked; in fact, it is the clue to the entire matter. Scope is the “whole field of experience in the light of the gospel.” That is, in Christian education curriculum, while every phase of human experience may be explored, it is all done from the standpoint of God’s self-disclosure and seeking love in Jesus Christ. Only in that way can a curriculum really be Christian. 27


26 Ibid., 15.

27 Colson and Rigdon, 47.
As to how Southern Baptists make use of this statement of scope, Colson and Rigdon comment:

Adapting language of the Cooperative Curriculum Project to their statement of broad themes (Man in God’s World, Revelation, Redemption, Discipleship, The Church), Southern Baptists include in their Curriculum Design Paper, the following explanation: “These broad themes are not to be regarded as separate slices of the scope, but rather as vantage points for viewing the total scope.”

Southern Baptists, however, take another approach to scope. This is made necessary by the distinctive nature of their five program organizations: Sunday School, Training Union, Woman’s Missionary Union, Brotherhood and Music Ministry. They use the term “curriculum area” to refer to an aspect of the total educational responsibility assigned to one of their church program organizations.

The Sunday School is responsible for teaching the biblical revelation. The Training Union is responsible for teaching and training in the areas of Christian doctrine, Christian ethics, Christian history church polity and organization, and performance skills. Woman’s Missionary Union and the Brotherhood are responsible for teaching missions. The Music Ministry is responsible for teaching music and hymnody.28

So the scope of the curriculum of Christian education encompasses the entire experience of the Christian in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It embraces his relationship to God and Christ, to his fellow man, to the world around him, and to the command of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission.

In looking back to the “organizing principle” of the Southern Baptist Curriculum Plan, one can see how these elements of curriculum design come together. By connecting this statement to the project at hand progression to the next step can be made. The organizing principle is: “the involvement of learners in a meaningful exploration of

---

28 Ibid., 49-50.
the realities of the Christian faith and life in such a way that they move toward attaining the educational objective. This is done in the context of the church’s life and work.” 29

The Context of the Curriculum

Where is the curriculum to function? What setting is appropriate? There is an old saying that all that is needed to have a school is a teacher, a learner, and a log on which they can sit. If that is true, then a curriculum can function in that context. According to the organizing principle, it is in the context of “the church’s life and work” 30 that the curriculum of the church school operates.

For evangelical Christians the pillars of a Christian society are the home, the church, and the school. Colson and Rigdon propose that the curriculum of Christian education is not limited to the church—at least not limited to the church building:

In a very real sense the church includes the Christian home. For many persons the family is the primary setting in which Christian learning takes place. Thus the Christian family may be thought of as the church in microcosm, and as such, it is of the greatest importance to the Christian experience and growth of its members. When the family circle is a fellowship of Christian love, it is easy for both children and adults to have Christian learning experiences. 31

Wyckoff explains further:

Fundamentally, Christian education takes place where the community of persons in Christ worships, witnesses, and works. This community has a life, a message, a mission, and a heritage; brought into being, sustained, and directed by God, it continues his reconciling work in Jesus Christ.

The worshiping, witnessing, working community of persons in Christ may be said to be the definitive locale of Christian education and its curriculum, since without

29 Ibid., 52.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 50.
the dynamic reality of the community of faith, Christian meaning cannot be communicated.  

In the project of this writer, the more specific locale in which Christian education is taking place is the Steadfast Bible Class, an adult Sunday School class of Thomas Road Baptist Church, where this writer is teacher. The broader locale is the community of older Christians associated with this class, including where they live, work, interact with friends, neighbors and family, and where they have opportunity to witness to the truth of the Gospel, model the Christian life in a hostile world, mentor children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and where they must learn to deal with life, aging and all that those things include. But in order to meet the objectives, and work within the scope and context of a curriculum for that clientele, there must be a process or a methodology identified.

The Methodology

Colson and Rigdon call it “methodology,” and Wyckoff refers to it as “process.” However one defines it, this section is the warp and woof of curriculum design. It is the process or methodology by which learning situations are developed to make Christian education happen. Wyckoff comments, “Design means deciding on

---


33 Colson and Rigdon, 52.

34 Wyckoff, 131.
sequence of activities and experiences by which the learning tasks may be effectively
undertaken by individuals and groups.\textsuperscript{35}

What are the "learning tasks?" Colson and Rigdon explain:

To Robert J. Havighurst of the University of Chicago we are indebted for a very
significant advance in our understanding of human nature and the developing
individual. In his \textit{Human Development and Education},\textsuperscript{36} he presents the thesis
that every human being has certain "developmental tasks" which he must
undertake at the proper stage of his growth from childhood, through adolescence,
to adulthood. At each stage of life the individual faces imperative tasks, the
performance of which are prerequisite to his further development. If he succeeds
with them, he grows and is thus prepared for the next level of experience. If he
does not, his development toward maturity is retarded.\textsuperscript{37}

Havighurst, in another book, \textit{Developmental Tasks and Education},\textsuperscript{38} contributes
to this project specifically in a section dealing with older people, which will be
considered later in this chapter. Generally, however, there many agree that Havighurst
influenced the work of Christian education by developing "learning tasks." Wyckoff
comments that this idea "has proved to be extremely useful and adaptable to Christian
education,"\textsuperscript{39} but that it has "required modification" in its application to Christian
education.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 161.

\textsuperscript{36} Robert J. Havighurst, \textit{Human Development and Education} (New York: Longmans, Green and
Company, 1953).

\textsuperscript{37} Colson and Rigdon, 54.

\textsuperscript{38} Robert J. Havighurst, \textit{Developmental Tasks and Education} (New York: David McKay

\textsuperscript{39} D. Campbell Wyckoff, \textit{The Gospel and Christian Education} (Philadelphia: Westminster Press,
1959) in Colson and Rigdon, 54.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
Those involved in the Cooperative Curriculum Project amplify this for those involved in Christian education:

For clarity and concreteness, learning in Christian education is described in terms of Learning Tasks. They offer practical handles for analyzing the experiences of the learner in any teaching-learning situation:

Five Learning Tasks have been identified:\footnote{41}

1. Listening with growing alertness to the gospel and responding in faith and love
2. Exploring the whole field of relationships in light of the gospel
3. Discovering meaning and value in the field of relationships in light of the gospel
4. Appropriating personally the meaning and value discovered in the field of relationships in light of the gospel
5. Assuming personal and social responsibility in light of the gospel\footnote{42}

Colson and Rigdon comment that these five learning tasks “are important enough to be pursued through an individual’s entire life span. Because of the nature of these tasks, they are not called ‘developmental’ but ‘lifelong.’”\footnote{43} They go on to say:

However, as we study the relation of these five tasks to one another, we discover that in reality there is but one task. The other four are continuing activities by which that one task is undertaken. The one task is the first on the list. To listen with growing alertness to the gospel and respond in faith and love is the one thing every human being needs to do throughout his life. We see, then, that by lifelong learning task is meant a great, overall, purposeful activity engaged in by learners from early childhood through all the stages of the

\footnote{41}{Numbering is not in the text, but is supplied by the dissertation writer.}

\footnote{42}{The Church’s Educational Ministry: A Curriculum Plan, 33.}

\footnote{43}{Colson and Rigdon, 54-55.}
life-span. The approach to Christian education in terms of a lifelong learning task is one of the most valuable elements of the newer developments in the field.\textsuperscript{44}

From this one lifelong learning task, with four continuing activities, Colson and Rigdon draw four advantages in the use of the continuing-learning-activity approach in Christian education:

1. Continuing learning activities furnish a basis for selecting and using subject matter. They help us to come up with the right answers to the question, What is to be taught and why?
2. They suggest approaches to the effective involvement of learners in the lifelong learning task.
3. They aid in the development of teaching-learning units. Such units form the basis of the quarterlies and books by which the curriculum plan is conveyed to churches, their leaders, teachers, and learners.
4. They form the basis for developing appropriate age-level activities.\textsuperscript{45}

The curriculum, as stated by Oliva earlier in this study, is “a program, a plan, content and learning experiences.”\textsuperscript{46} Wyckoff shows how subject matter and learning experiences are tied together:

Traditionally, subject matter and experience have been separated in curriculum thinking. When the pupil passed through the door of the school we tended to think of him as leaving his life experience behind and entering the world of subject matter. This was impossible, however, since the moment he came into the situation he brought his life experience with him. Furthermore, the life of the school itself consisted of myriad experiences. But every effort was made to forget that this was the case and to concentrate on subject matter.

Experience and subject matter are also tied together, because experience is poor and thin unless it is rooted in rich and fertile subject matter. How do I make a

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 55.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 59.

\textsuperscript{46} Oliva, 8.
choice in life? This is the consideration of life experience. My answer, however, is bound to be flimsy unless I am reading the important books on the subject (including the Bible), listening to what experienced people have to say on it, and giving consideration to some of the films on the subject. Books, the Bible, other people’s experience, the films are subject matter.\(^{47}\)

Wyckoff then lists almost a full page of “-ings” (ninety-six, to be exact), such as growing, understanding, needing, wanting, teaching, collecting, etc. He says that “active experience is expressed grammatically by ‘ing.’ This is what goes on in the curriculum. People do things, reflect on what they do (which is a form of doing), and learn from that doing and reflection.”\(^{48}\)

According to Wyckoff, “a serious attempt must be made to determine the basic experience categories of education, around which all other educational activities may cluster and to which they contribute. It is this challenge to rigorous and comprehensive categorization of educational activities that has led to the formulation of the basic learning tasks:

- Making contact with the field of relationships.
- Exploring the field of relationships.
- Discovering meaning and value in the field of relationships.
- Appropriating that meaning and value personally.
- Assuming personal and social responsibility.\(^{49}\)

He says that “The whole process of perception, conceptualization, and the sharing of general human experience is summed up in these learning tasks.”\(^{50}\)

\(^{47}\) Wyckoff, *Theory and Design*, 149-150.

\(^{48}\) Ibid., 150.

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 151.

\(^{50}\) Ibid.
Continuing with this concept, Wyckoff adds:

Sequence of goals and activities are also indispensable to the curriculum. This means coming to grips, step by step, through various levels with various aspects of the field of relationships, experiencing them more fully and meaningfully. For instance, some sequence as this might be applicable to the Bible:

- Discovering, seeing, and hearing the Bible.
- Reading, analyzing, weighing, understanding, appreciating, and memorizing the Bible.
- Believing, accepting, loving, and using the Bible.
- Sharing, witnessing to, and teaching the Bible.

Notice in this connection how closely this analysis parallels the tasks of making contact, exploring, discovering meaning and value, appropriating meaning and value, and assuming responsibility. This bears out the probability that there is in the learning tasks not only a sharp definition of the basic modes of educational experience but also a clue to educational sequence.

As an organizing medium, then, the learning tasks provide a practical way of translating the scope of Christian education into goals and activities that spell out the process of Christian education.\(^51\)

Consideration of age level is also important in regard to the methodology of curriculum design. Colson and Rigdon, in discussing the various age groups within the church, comment that “the statements identify the readiness of the learner for this theme in terms of his basic needs, interests, motivations, capacities, and developmental tasks.”\(^52\)

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 153-154.

\(^{52}\) Colson and Rigdon, 64.
They then suggest that:

Age-level readinesses are used by curriculum designers and church leaders in the following ways:

1. To establish the optimum age at which to introduce various concepts.
2. To help determine the methods and activities to be used at each age level.
3. To help determine the proper sequence for presenting content through the life-span.
4. To keep all educational organizations in the church consistent as to the concepts and approaches used with each age level.

The selection and use of appropriate methods in communicating the Christian message is a matter of major concern to Christian teachers and leaders. If desirable changes in the lives of learners are to be brought about, the methods employed must be related to the ways people learn; otherwise the methods may be worse than useless. An educational method is a means of achieving an educational end. It is a procedure used in a teaching-learning situation for the purpose of assisting persons to learn and change.53

"The methods employed must be related to ways people learn."54 say Colson and Rigdon. Since this project involves a curriculum of topics for senior adults, some discussion about how adults, more specifically, older adults learn, and the methodology used in the curriculum development for them, is in order. Again, it must be stated that while the focus of this study is not on teaching methods, it nonetheless must include the methodology of constructing a basic curriculum for a particular age level.

53 Ibid., 65.
54 Ibid.
How Adults Learn

Brookfield did a major study in which he goes into depth concerning the various approaches to adult learning. In referring to one important example, he states:

As a result of a career-long exploration of the development of adult’s learning-to-learn capacities, Smith (1982a) has identified six general observations concerning the nature of learning: it is lifelong, it is personal, it involves change, it is partially a function of human development, it pertains to experience, and it is partially intuitive. Adult learners, however, also exhibit four essential characteristics. First, they have multiple roles and responsibilities, and this results in a different orientation to learning from that of children and adolescents. For example, they wish to make good educational use of the finite time they invest in education, they often take responsibility for identifying what they wish to learn, and they have a partially or fully formed self-concept. Second, adults have accumulated many life experiences, and these result in distinct preferences for modes of learning and learning environments, such modes and environments comprising the essentials of individual learning styles. Third, adults pass through a number of developmental phases in the physical, psychological, and social spheres, and the transitions from one phase to another provide for the reinterpretation and rearrangement of past experience. Finally, Smith argues, adults experience anxiety and ambivalence in their orientation to learning. In particular, attempts to become more autonomous and self-directed are likely to involve threatening elements. Anxiety and stress may also be the result of job pressure, relational problems with significant others (lovers, spouses, parents, children, close friends) or of the adult’s recalling the anxiety produced by earlier schooling experiences.\(^{55}\)

Gangel and Wilhoit offer this concerning the older adult and learning:

One of the questions most important to us (those who work with older adults) asks, “Can older adults learn?” That is, do the losses which occur during the aging process impair cognitive functions to the extent that ability to participate in teaching-learning experiences is seriously diminished?

Perhaps the watershed in considering this issue came out of the work of E. L. Thorndike, who contended that the power to learn declines only slightly during the process of aging.\(^{56}\) Later, his student Irving Lorge concluded that the rate (or


speed) at which one learns may decline as one ages without affecting the ability or power to learn.\(^57\)

For the older adult, Havighurst lists what he calls “developmental tasks of later maturity:”

1. Adjusting to decreasing physical strength and health;
2. Adjustment to retirement and reduced income;
3. Adjusting to the death of a spouse;
4. Meeting social and civic obligations; and
5. Establishing satisfactory physical living arrangements.\(^58\)

So while the older adult can and often does remain active intellectually throughout the life span, there are definitely physical and psychological challenges that most likely will detract from those pursuits. Sell observes:

Without wisdom, the older person lives in despair. Hopelessness and the fear of death breed disgust, and disgust gives birth to chronic complaining and disdain for everything. Mental and behavioral problems of old age may be the spasms of the inner battle for integrity.

Robert Peck lists three developmental tasks that are steps toward integrity:\(^59\)

- Finding personal worth outside of work and roles;
- Finding greater enjoyment in mental and social activities than in physical activities;
- Finding in unselfish service to others a means of self-perpetuation.

Sell continues:

The self-esteem begs for an answer: “Am I a worthwhile person only insofar as I can do a full-time job, or can I be worthwhile in other roles and because of the kind of person I am?” The older person must not make “usefulness” his own fuel

---

\(^57\) Gangel and Wilhoit, 226.

\(^58\) Havighurst, Developmental Tasks and Education, 92-98.

for self-esteem. The diet that feeds integrity will have to change as a person’s contribution lessens and dependency on others increases. The core of the Christian faith speaks to this.\textsuperscript{60}

In large measure this kind of information bolsters this writer’s determination to design a curriculum of topics for senior adults that will provide an alternative for those who desire to have a vigorous teaching ministry to this increasingly important and needy age group. The principles gathered toward this end will make this goal a reality.

\textsuperscript{60} Sell, 214.
Summary

It has been determined that several steps are required in order to develop a curriculum of topics for teaching senior adults in Sunday School. First, the church’s objective must be made clear. For Thomas Road Baptist Church, that is “That our membership may glorify God through the proclamation of the gospel and the promotion of spiritual growth in people from Central Virginia to all the world.”61 Second, out of that objective the educational objective must be developed and expressed. In this case, the educational objective may be stated as being “To help persons become aware of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, respond to Him in a personal commitment of faith, strive to follow Him in the full meaning of discipleship, relate effectively to His church and its mission in the world, live in conscious recognition of the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit, and grow toward Christian maturity.”62

Third, the scope, or what may be included in the curriculum must be determined and clearly stated. It may be stated thusly: “The scope of the curriculum of Christian education encompasses the entire experience of the Christian in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It embraces his relationship to God and Christ, to his fellow man, to the world around him, and to the command of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission.”63

Fourth, the context of the curriculum, or where and in what setting will the curriculum will function, may be defined as: “The community of older Christians, including where

61 Thomas Road Baptist Church Ministry Manual, 2.

62 Colson and Rigdon, 156.

63 Definition by this dissertation writer.
they live, work, interact with friends, neighbors, and family, and where they have opportunity to witness to the truth of the gospel, model the Christian life in a hostile world, mentor children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and where they must learn to deal with life, aging, and all that those things include.\textsuperscript{64}

Fifth, the methodology used to decide on the sequence of activities and experiences by which the learning tasks may be effectively undertaken by individuals and groups is described, in the context of how adults, especially older adults, learn.

With these basic principles of curriculum design in place the result of this project, A Five-Year Curriculum of Topics for Teaching Senior Adults in Sunday School, may now be described.

\textsuperscript{64} Definition by this dissertation writer.
CHAPTER SIX

A SUGGESTED FIVE-YEAR CURRICULUM
OF TOPICS FOR TEACHING SENIOR ADULTS IN SUNDAY SCHOOL

Introduction

During the 2002-2003 college football season a good deal of national attention is being paid to two septuagenarians who are in a battle to determine who will be in first place on the all-time victories list. Bobby Bowden of Florida State University, 72, has 324 career victories in Division I, and Joe Paterno of Penn State University, 74, is the current all-time victory leader with 327 wins. Paterno has already passed the legendary Paul “Bear” Bryant on the list, and Bowden will undoubtedly pass him early in this season.

In the CBS News story that accompanied the report was the comment, “Since the Industrial Revolution, the average life expectancy has doubled from 35 to 73. Just a hundred years ago the average life was only 47. Now Paterno and Bowden are essentially in biological ‘overtime.’”

This is indicative of the times, in that all over the world people are living longer than ever, except for some of the ages recorded in early Biblical history. It points up the

---

changing demographics in the United States as well as the expressed needs and concerns of senior citizens in Central Virginia which have been dealt with in this project. For older Christians, the prospect of longer lives means more opportunities for serving the Lord and, at the same time it means more concerns for their health and well being.

In this study data have been collected concerning the general needs of senior adults, as well as the expressed needs and preferences of a group of senior adults in Central Virginia. In applying these studies in the formation of a curriculum of topics for Sunday School teaching, one must keep in mind that there is still the responsibility to present “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) in teaching and preaching. At the same time it has been determined that older Christians have ideas about what they need and believe they should receive from God’s church.

In a secular setting, Brookfield touches on this:

Felt needs, then, are expressions of preference or desire by learners. Prescribed needs are premised upon educators’ beliefs concerning the skills, knowledge, behaviors, and values that they feel adults should acquire. To base education and training programs on a mix of felt and prescribed needs causes some educators to feel uncomfortable. It seems arrogant and authoritarian compared to the apparently democratic process of responding solely to the felt needs of learners. Nonetheless, it is my contention that a total subscription to a felt needs approach to program development condemns education to an adaptive, reactive mode and turns educators into mere providers of consumer goods. The exact form of these goods, according to this rationale, is to be determined by the market forces of expressed learner preferences. The educator becomes an automaton or functionary, a technician responding to expressed desires but with no responsibility for suggesting alternative curricula or activities. Such a view absolves the educator from ever having to make value choices or from having to prompt learners to consider the possibility of other ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. This is entirely unacceptable as a way of viewing an educator’s professional responsibilities. Those who behave in this manner and who equate
the sum total of education with reacting to expressed learner needs are technicians, not educators.²

On a spiritual level this has special meaning for those in Christian education who believe there is absolute truth in the Word of God. On the one hand they have a responsibility to ensure that their pupils receive all that God has for them in His Word, and on the other hand a desire and responsibility to see that their needs are met in every way possible. Some believe that all that is needed is to simply teach the Bible, and since all of God’s wisdom is contained therein, the needs of individuals will be met simply by doing so.

Others believe that teaching topics that are geared to pupils’ needs is the best way to go. If there is no prescribed curriculum teachers may experiment with this, follow fads or trends, or try things that others are doing, to the point that they either hit on something the pupils like or that they personally like, or perhaps resign from teaching.

In the case of older Christians, especially those who have been following Christ for sixty to seventy years or more, this writer decided to ask them what their interests, concerns, and preferences are, and this project is the result of those questions. It is believed that a curriculum for this age group can be developed that faithfully delivers “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), while at the same time carefully meeting the felt needs and preferences. In chapters three and four the results of the study are reported. In chapter five principles of curriculum design are studied, and in this chapter those principles are used to construct a curriculum of topics for teaching older Christians.

² Brookfield, 222.
Review of Curriculum Materials

In preparation for developing a curriculum some existing curriculum materials were reviewed to discover what is presently being done for senior adults in this regard, and to determine a basic framework that could be utilized. The materials are LifeWay Christian Resources (Southern Baptist Convention) and Regular Baptist Press (General Association of Regular Baptist Churches).

LifeWay Christian Resources

LifeWay has a complete range of adult Sunday School materials, including different series for more than one Bible version (KJV, NIV, etc.), as well as for different age groupings. The following materials were reviewed as samples of adult and senior adult offerings:

Adult Learner Guide, Summer 2001
Adult Leader Guide, Summer 2001
(for married & single adults ages 60-74)
(for married & single adults ages 60-74)

Since the Ventures & Pathways series is directed to the age group included in this study (60-74), the Leader Guide listed above was reviewed more closely. While curriculum materials per se are not a part of this study, this writer’s observation is that
these are attractive, colorful, have easy-to-read type fonts for older people, and included more than adequate resources for the teacher.

In the opening section, “How to Use the Leader Guide,” this note is included:

Adults 60-up have special needs and interests. The Bible addresses those needs and interests. One need all adults have, including teachers, is the need to be transformed continually into the image of Christ—into a more mature Christian. The Ventures and Pathways Leader Guide is designed to facilitate teachers’ spiritual transformation and to enable them to teach in such a way that members experience salvation and ongoing transformation. As a teacher, you have the opportunity to help adults apply Bible truths to their daily lives. In so doing, they will continue to gain spiritual maturity.\(^3\)

In every quarterly is listed seven elements of Bible study to facilitate spiritual transformation:

1. Acknowledge authority (control).
2. Search the Scriptures (content).
3. Understand the truth (concept).
4. Personalize the truth (context).
5. Struggle with the truth (conflict).
6. Believe the truth (conviction).
7. Obey the truth (conduct).

Also included are introductions to those who wrote each section for a particular quarter, helps for the family, overview of lesson themes for each age division for the

quarter, denomination information, and additional resources for the teacher. The lesson
material is very thorough, with options the teacher may or may not choose to use.

A sample quarter's outline is:

**STUDY THEME: ONE SOLITARY LIFE: THE LIFE OF JESUS**
**UNIT 2: BORN TO SAVE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 3</td>
<td>New Beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 10</td>
<td>Unfolding Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 17</td>
<td>Gift of the Savior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 24</td>
<td>Responses to Jesus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 31</td>
<td>Worthy to Be Worshiped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 7</td>
<td>Marks of Maturity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 14</td>
<td>Preparation for Jesus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**STUDY THEME: ONE SOLITARY LIFE: THE LIFE OF JESUS**
**UNIT 3: INTRODUCING JESUS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 21</td>
<td>Victorious Living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 28</td>
<td>Transforming Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 4</td>
<td>Satisfaction Guaranteed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 11</td>
<td>Taking Jesus at His Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 18</td>
<td>Announcing Good News</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 25</td>
<td>Following Jesus[^4]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A format for the framework of the curriculum of topics this writer will develop is found in the regular Adult Leader Guide for 2000-2001:

**Study Plan:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Winter</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(The Model for the Church of the 21st Century)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-02</td>
<td>1 &amp; 2 Thessalonians (Living the Faith)</td>
<td>Deuteronomy (A Covenant People)</td>
<td>Ephesians (God’s New People)</td>
<td>2 Samuel (1 Chron.) (David: Lessons on Faith and Frailty)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02-03</td>
<td>John 1-12 Galatians/James (New Life)</td>
<td>John 13-21 (New Life)</td>
<td>1 Kings</td>
<td>(Freedom for Responsible Living)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Stay Focused on the Lord)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regular Baptist Press

Regular Baptist Press has nowhere near the size clientele as LifeWay Christian Resources, reflecting the difference in the sizes of their respective denominations. The Sunday School curriculum materials for adults is entering a new cycle, one that reflects sets of brand new lesson series.

The previous cycle (see Appendix C), consisted of eleven quarters of Old Testament Studies, fourteen quarters of New Testament Studies, and ten quarters of Topical Studies. They are called “Adult Electives,” which means that churches and/or

---

5 Ibid., 74.
teachers may choose the series they want to use, and the order in which they will use them. In Appendix C they are referred to as “Adult Electives—Previous Format.” These lessons are written by leading pastors and educators of the denomination, such as Ernest Pickering and Donald Tyler, and other well-known contributors such as Henry M. Morris.

A new cycle of lesson materials is currently under construction, referred to as “Adult Electives—New Format” in Appendix C. The first quarter’s lessons, written by Donald Gromacki, are entitled, “Revelation: Future Events—Present Hope.” In the opening section an introduction to the curriculum and to the specific lesson series reads:

One main desire: adults that are GROUNDED in the Word and GROWING in Christ.

The “Grounded and Growing” series teaches the need for personal salvation, Biblical literacy, and a faith-based Christian living. In this series Christ is lifted up, and His church is central to a grounded and growing life of faith.

May God bless you and your adult learners as you seek to be grounded in the Word and growing in Christ.  

In the introduction it is emphasized that the series has “Two Presentation Formats: CLASSROOM or the SMALL GROUP.” The small groups referred to are set in what is called a “relational community presentation.” This writer found that some use the lessons for small groups at church at some time other than Sunday morning, and some use them in home Bible study or cell groups.

---

6 Adult Teacher (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Church, 2000), 2.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.
Again, as with LifeWay, these curriculum materials are attractive, colorful, well-written and well-laid-out, and have more than adequate helps for the teacher. The quarterly utilizes “fill-in-the-blanks” for the pupils.

A sample quarter’s outline is:

**Unit 1** The Vision of Christ and the Churches of Asia
- Session 1 The Vision of Christ
- Session 2 The Seven Church Letters (Part 1)
- Session 3 The Seven Church Letters (Part 2)

**Unit 2** The Throne, The Lamb, and the Beginning of Judgments
- Session 4 The Throne and the book
- Session 5 The Seal Judgments
- Session 6 The Trumpet Judgments
- Session 7 The Holy Conflicts

**Unit 3** The Continuation of Judgments and the Introduction Of Evil Persons
- Session 8 The Beasts
- Session 9 The Bowl Judgments
- Session 10 The Fall of Babylon

**Unit 4** The Coming of Christ, the Final Judgments, and The Eternal State
- Session 11 The Second Coming of Christ
- Session 12 The Millennium and the Great White Throne
- Session 13 The Eternal State

These two reviews are of materials that are distinctively Baptist and evangelistic in approach and methodology. Bible-believing congregations would be well served if

---

9 Ibid., 3
they made use of the curriculum materials in their Sunday School programs. There are elements in each that appeal to this writer and adult Sunday School teacher, and these will be integrated into his lessons. Neither, however, are specifically constructed to bring into focus the needs and preferences that are reflected in this writer’s study, and neither cause the writer to forgo creating a curriculum of topics for senior adults.

In the next section will be found the worksheets used by this writer in formulating a suggested curriculum, and the framework for the curriculum itself.
Curriculum Worksheets

In order to determine the structure or framework of the curriculum of topics for teaching senior adults in Sunday School, the application of the results of the study—the needs and preferences of those in this age group—must be shown. On the next three pages will be found the three worksheets used by the writer to illustrate this activity. It will be noted that these correspond to the survey results reported in Chapter Four. From the worksheets the writer was able to construct the final curriculum plan.
# TABLE 8. PREFERRED SUBJECT MATTER OF TEACHING

**FIRST CHOICE: NEW TESTAMENT BOOK STUDIES**

**Curriculum Response:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book/topic:</th>
<th>Sub-title:</th>
<th>Need/preference met:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Matthew</td>
<td>Kingdom Values</td>
<td>N T Study Personal growth Prophetic themes Health &amp; personal values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. John</td>
<td>God Revealed to Man</td>
<td>N T Study Doctrinal themes Christian service Personal growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Philippians</td>
<td>The Joy Way</td>
<td>N T Study Family values Dealing with personal difficulties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 1, 2 Peter</td>
<td>Triumphant Faith</td>
<td>N T Study Family values Christian service Prophetic themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Romans</td>
<td>Jesus Saves!</td>
<td>N T Study Doctrinal themes Christian service Prophetic themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 1, 2 Thessalonians</td>
<td>Spiritual Examples</td>
<td>N T Study Doctrinal themes Prophetic themes Role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Epistles of John</td>
<td>Knowledge is Power</td>
<td>N T Study Personal growth Family values Role models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Galatians</td>
<td>Christian Liberty</td>
<td>N T Study Family themes Doctrinal themes Health &amp; personal values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### TABLE 9. PREFERRED SUBJECT MATTER OF TEACHING

#### SECOND CHOICE: PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN LIVING

**Curriculum Response:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book/topic:</th>
<th>Sub-title:</th>
<th>Need(s)/preferences met:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Walking with God  | Extreme Fellowship          | Family values  
                        | Personal growth  
                        | Devotion  
                        | Health & personal values |
| 2. Being an example  | The Inner Life              | Family values  
                        | Christian service  
                        | Leadership training  
                        | Character study |
| 3. Prayer            | How to Change Things        | Devotion  
                        | Praise & worship  
                        | Personal growth  
                        | Health & personal values |
| 4. Psalms 1-72       | Devotion                    | O T Knowledge and Application  
                        | Praise and prayer  
                        | Prophetic themes |
| 5. Psalms 73-150     | Discipleship                | O T Knowledge and Application  
                        | Praise and prayer  
                        | Prophetic themes |
| 6. Proverbs          | How to Live                 | Practical wisdom  
                        | Personal growth  
                        | Health & personal values |
| 7. Facing life’s problems | Grace That is Sufficient | Family values  
                        | Christian service  
                        | Personal growth  
                        | Health & personal values |
| 8. Spiritual giftedness | God’s Will                 | N T Study  
                        | Personal growth  
                        | Christian service  
                        | Practical wisdom |
### TABLE 10. PREFERRED SUBJECT MATTER OF TEACHING

**THIRD CHOICE: BIBLE PROPHECY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book/topic:</th>
<th>Sub-title:</th>
<th>Need(s)/preferences met:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Daniel      | Purpose, Prayer, and Prophecy | Practical example  
Prophetic themes  
Christian service |
| 2. Revelation 1-5 | Christ Revealed      | N T Study  
Prophetic themes  
Doctrinal themes |
| 3. Revelation 6-22 | Christ and His Church | N T Study  
Prophetic themes  
Doctrinal themes |
| 4. Minor Prophets | Judgment and Mercy   | O T Study  
Character study  
Prophetic themes |

In Table 7, several New Testament book studies were selected—Matthew, John, Philippians, 1 and 2 Peter, Romans, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, the three Epistles of John, and Galatians—to reflect the first choice of subject matter in the poll. In each case the needs and/or preferences met by these Scriptures are indicated. Because the first and second choices in the area of subject matter preferred—New Testament Book Studies and Practical Christian Living—were so close to each other (44% preferred the former, and
43% the latter), they are treated as being equal in the number of quarterly topics assigned to each: eight.

In Table 8, Practical Christian Living is on the surface made up of topical lessons, with the exception of two quarters devoted to the Psalms and one quarter given to Proverbs. In every quarter, however, the lessons reflect the preferences of almost half the respondents.

Bible prophecy, with only 24.3% expressing that preference, gets only four quarters of lessons. While that does not seem to reflect the general popularity of prophetic themes currently, apparently those in this particular age group believe other things are more important.

At the same time, all three choices, New Testament Book Studies, Practical Christian Living, and Bible Prophecy, are somewhat interrelated in that when one teaches many of the New Testament books, topics of a practical Christian nature will be touched upon. Likewise, when one teaches Bible prophecy, some New Testament book studies will be involved, and practical Christian living will be considered.

The clear intent, however, is to reflect what the respondents indicated in the surveys. Inasmuch as there are both general needs and expressed needs and preferences reported, along with the underlying need, which is to fulfill the church's objective and the educational objective, everything together must be brought into play in the resulting curriculum plan.
Two concerns come to mind. First, is the curriculum consistent with sound
principles? Colson and Rigdon list seven characteristics of good curriculum:

1. *Biblical and theological soundness* are important to assure that what is taught
   in the curriculum is genuine Christianity.
2. *Relevancy* has to do with suiting the teaching to the nature and needs of the
   learners in their current situation.
3. *Comprehensiveness* means that the curriculum will include all that is essential
   in the scope and all that is essential to the development of well-rounded
   Christian personality on the part of learners.
4. *Balance* means that the curriculum will have neither overemphasis nor
   underemphasis of the various parts that make it up.
5. *Sequence* is the presentation of portions of curriculum content in the best
   order for learning.
6. *Flexibility* is important if the curriculum is to be adaptable to the individual
   differences of the learners, adaptable to churches of different types, and
   adaptable to the varying abilities of leaders and teachers.
7. *Correlation* is the proper relation of part to part in the total curriculum plan.

Each of these deserves a comment, for it is necessary that the proposed
curriculum meets the standard. As to *Biblical and theological soundness*, it should be
noted that the majority of the quarterly topics cover Biblical themes and topics.

*Relevancy* is ensured by the process through which the curriculum was developed. The
curriculum is *comprehensive* in that it does cover what is defined in the scope, and works
to develop the Christian personality and character of senior adults.

*Balance* is achieved by including a good mixture of the Old and the New
Testaments and necessary topical themes. It should be noted that, although in the survey
preferences Old Testament Book Studies did not score high, to maintain a balance Old
Testament themes appear often due to inclusion of Psalms and Proverbs in Practical
Christian Living, and Daniel and the Minor Prophets in the Biblical Prophecy category.
Sequence is achieved in the sense that purposeful placement of the quarterly topics was carried out. Flexibility is ensured since these topics are at the same time universal in their influence and specific in their possibilities of application. Because the topics, especially the Bible book studies, are inherently part of the whole of Scripture, and the topical studies are so much in the mainstream of Christian thought, correlation is ensured.

The second concern is that the proposed curriculum could be considered by some to be incomplete because it does not include Genesis or any of the Pentateuch. It is certainly not that these books are of no consequence or interest to the senior adult. Because the writer is working to meet the expressed needs and preferences of this age group, however, and due to the limitations of space and time, that decision had to be made.

To compensate for the fact that Genesis especially is not in the plan, one must look to the opportunity a teacher will have to include references to key passages in the book when teaching others that are included. For example, while teaching John, Matthew, Romans or Galatians, there would be natural opportunities to bring in important teachings from Genesis.

With the discussion of the curriculum worksheets completed, it is now appropriate to look at the proposed Curriculum Framework.
The Curriculum Framework

TABLE 11.

FIVE YEAR SUNDAY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

For Individuals Aged 65 and Over

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>FALL</th>
<th>WINTER</th>
<th>SPRING</th>
<th>SUMMER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Psalms 1-72</td>
<td>Psalms 73-150</td>
<td>Walking with God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kingdom Values</td>
<td>Devotion</td>
<td>Discipleship</td>
<td>Extreme Fellowship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>John</td>
<td>Revelation 1-5</td>
<td>Revelation 6-22</td>
<td>Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>God Revealed to Man</td>
<td>Christ Revealed</td>
<td>Christ &amp; His Church</td>
<td>How to Change Things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>Romans</td>
<td>Minor Prophets</td>
<td>Philippians</td>
<td>Facing Life's Problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus Saves!</td>
<td>Judgment and Mercy</td>
<td>The Joy Way</td>
<td>Sufficient Grace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>Galatians</td>
<td>1 &amp; 2 Peter</td>
<td>Proverbs</td>
<td>Spiritual Gifedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Christian Liberty</td>
<td>Triumphant Faith</td>
<td>How to Live</td>
<td>God's Will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>1 &amp; 2 Thessalonians</td>
<td>Daniel Purpose, Prayer and Prophecy</td>
<td>Being an Example</td>
<td>1, 2, 3 John</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spiritual Examples</td>
<td>The Inner Life</td>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge is Power</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This curriculum plan is the result of taking the worksheets (Tables 8, 9, and 10) and distributing the conclusions drawn onto a grid that reflects the overall survey data. The initial cycle of lessons is set to begin in the Fall Quarter of 2002-2003 because that is when this writer and teacher of the Steadfast Bible Class plans to implement it for his own ministry. More detailed lesson plans will be developed and stored in such a manner as to make them available to others who teach senior adults.

The curriculum of topics as developed is designed for senior adults located in Central Virginia, but could potentially be used in any other locale where a curriculum for this age group is needed. Since the general needs reported in this project are in large part national in scope, and since the general preferences reported would not vary dramatically except in other cultures, it lends itself to more general use.

Summary

The burgeoning opportunities and challenges facing not only senior citizens but those who minister to them are at the same time exciting and frightening. Only those churches and parachurch ministries who anticipate and plan for these changes will be able to meet the needs. In some cases churches—large and not so large—that are more traditional and inflexible will find themselves totally unprepared.

For those who do prepare, the opportunities for ministry can be exciting. The challenge of mobilizing a growing number of older Christians to witness to those in their own age group, to mentor young people, to be spiritual consultants in the workplace, and so on, presents a great opportunity. At the same time, ministry to these older Christians will, at times, become frightening because of the growing population and the parallel
higher costs of health care, housing, and unemployment, lack of resources, and so on. Both the senior citizen and those who minister to him face potentially great challenges.

This study has been undertaken in a small part to help this writer plan for the future needs of his Sunday School class, whose ages mostly extend from sixty to eighty. In a somewhat larger context he wishes to contribute to meeting some of these challenges not only in his class or church, but in the community at large. It is his sincere desire to be, as the saying goes, “part of the solution and not part of the problem.”

The Biblical and theological basis for the study has been set forth, as well as data supportive of the general needs of senior citizens as well as their expressed needs and preferences in the area of Sunday School teaching. An introductory study of the basic principles of curriculum design has been offered to lay a foundation for a suggested curriculum of topics for teaching this age group.

The overriding objective of this exercise is to participate in the continuing work of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, to personally be involved in taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth, and to influence others to do the same. This will be done in many ways, one of which involves “teaching them to observe whatsoever I (the Lord Jesus Christ) have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20a).
## TABLE A1

**PROFILE OF AGE CHARACTERISTICS**

**Profile of Age Characteristics for the United States: 2000 and 1990**

(Based on 2000 and 1990 Census Data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEX AND AGE</th>
<th>2000 Census Data</th>
<th>1990 Census Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>138,053,563</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>143,368,343</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 years</td>
<td>19,175,798</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9 years</td>
<td>20,549,505</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 14 years</td>
<td>20,528,072</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 to 19 years</td>
<td>20,219,890</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 24 years</td>
<td>18,964,001</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 to 34 years</td>
<td>39,891,724</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 to 44 years</td>
<td>45,148,527</td>
<td>16.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 to 54 years</td>
<td>37,677,952</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 to 59 years</td>
<td>13,469,237</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 to 64 years</td>
<td>10,805,447</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 to 74 years</td>
<td>18,390,986</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75 to 84 years</td>
<td>12,361,180</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85 years and over</td>
<td>4,239,587</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age (years)</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>EXPERIMENTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 years and over</td>
<td>209,128,094</td>
<td>74.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>100,994,367</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>108,133,727</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 years and over</td>
<td>196,899,193</td>
<td>70.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62 years and over</td>
<td>41,256,029</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years and over</td>
<td>34,991,753</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14,409,625</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20,582,128</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table compiled by the U. S. Administration on Aging

APPENDIX B

SURVEY OF OLDER CHRISTIANS

On the next two pages are found the "Survey: Sunday School Teaching for Older Christians" upon which the results in Chapter Four are based.
SURVEY: SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHING
FOR OLDER CHRISTIANS

The purpose of this survey is to determine the topics and types of teaching preferred by and which best meet the needs of older Christians. Please answer the following questions as honestly and sincerely as you can.

AS TO YOUR AGE:

*Please indicate which age category applies to you:*

( ) Under 45  ( ) 45-55  ( ) 55-65  ( ) 65-75  ( ) 75-85  ( ) Over 85

AS TO THE CURRENT PRESSING CONCERNS OF OLDER CHRISTIANS:

*Of the concerns listed below, what are the three (3) most important? (circle ONLY your top three)*

1. Health & fitness
2. Socialization & recreation
3. Volunteer opportunities
4. Education opportunities
5. Employment opportunities
6. Preventive health information
7. Caregiver groups
8. Emergency financial assistance
9. Companionship
10. Personal counseling
11. Financial counseling
12. Children/grandchildren/great-grandchildren
AS TO THE TYPES OF TEACHING PREFERRED BY OLDER CHRISTIANS:

What teaching methods/techniques do you prefer in Sunday School?

(Rank the following by marking in the space to the left of each method/technique "1" for the most preferred, "2" for the next preference, etc., etc.)

( ) Lecture method
( ) Lecture with fill-in-the-blank lesson sheets
( ) Lecture with discussion
( ) Lecture with question and answer
( ) Discussion groups
( ) Object lesson with discussion
( ) Other ________________________________

AS TO THE SUBJECT MATTER OF TEACHING PREFERRED BY OLDER CHRISTIANS:

What Bible topics interest you most?

(Rank the following by marking in the space to the left of each topic "1" for the most preferred, "2" for the next preference, etc., etc.)

( ) Old Testament book studies
( ) New Testament book studies
( ) Practical Christian living
( ) Bible characters
( ) Bible doctrines
( ) Bible prophecy
( ) Church history
( ) Other ________________________________
APPENDIX C

SAMPLES OF CURRICULUM MATERIALS

On the next two pages are samples of the Regular Baptist Press Adult Electives offerings, one being the “Previous Format” used prior to the Fall of 2000, and the other being the “New Format,” used after the Fall of 2000.
## ADULT ELECTIVES—PREVIOUS FORMAT

(Material published prior to Fall 2006)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TITLE &amp; AUTHOR</th>
<th>BOOK OR TOPIC</th>
<th>COURSE DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Old Testament Studies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Origin of Israel and Its People by Henry M. Morris</td>
<td>Genesis</td>
<td>Creation by God is the foundation of all Biblical truth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Nation in Decline: The Divided Kingdom by Denis A. Warner</td>
<td>Various Old Testament books</td>
<td>God’s sovereignty, grace, judgment, and fulfillments are demonstrated in Israel’s history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipped for Service by Gary L. Hauck</td>
<td>Nahum</td>
<td>Practical instruction for spiritual leaders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songs That Touch the Heart by John White</td>
<td>Psalms</td>
<td>A warm, personal relationship with God springs from the heart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life and Love by Charles F. Evans</td>
<td>Zechariah; Song of Solomon</td>
<td>Light of life, with God delight, in love as God designed it in the garden.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portraits of Charity in Isaiah by Ashley W. Wilson</td>
<td>Isaiah</td>
<td>The prophet’s capacity to sustain the warnings of God, the Messiah, even in the face of the people’s rebellion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Lord Is Faithful by Daniel Gere</td>
<td>Jeremiah; Lamentations</td>
<td>Exploring the faithfulness of God during Israel’s troubling times, God reveals Himself, God saves His people, and God restores His people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Glory of the Lord by James R. Lytle</td>
<td>Exile</td>
<td>See God’s claim on both history and prophecy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel: A Man Beloved of God by Arthur B. Woodson</td>
<td>Daniel</td>
<td>See God’s claim on both history and prophecy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rain &amp; Restoration: Minor Prophets, Part 1 by John Haring II &amp; John Haring III</td>
<td>Minor Prophets, Hosea-Malachi</td>
<td>Never’s rise and fall according to God’s will.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rain &amp; Restoration: Minor Prophets, Part 2 by John Haring II &amp; John Haring III</td>
<td>Minor Prophets, Nahum-Malachi</td>
<td>Never’s rise and fall according to God’s will.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Testament Studies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building a Winning Team by John T. Day</td>
<td>1 Corinthians</td>
<td>God hasSubscriber privileges for the church in any age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life, Libraries, and the Pursuit of Holiness by Daniel J. Evans</td>
<td>Galatians</td>
<td>Connect the two libraries of spiritual freedom with doctrine or legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life in Christ by John Haring II</td>
<td>Ephesians</td>
<td>Examine God’s plan to save us and the plan we share in Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Joyful Life by William L. Ay</td>
<td>Philippians</td>
<td>Discover the reasons for being joyful with supernatural joy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete in Christ by James D. Brown</td>
<td>Colossians</td>
<td>The believer is a complete person in Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Made of A Mighty Church by Ashley W. Wilson</td>
<td>1, 2 Thessalonians</td>
<td>Practical guidance on many facets of church life and ministry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back to the Basics of Ministry by John R. Greening</td>
<td>1 Timothy</td>
<td>The Bible provides a basis for strong, enduring church ministry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believers in the Last Days by Jack R. Riggs</td>
<td>2 Timothy</td>
<td>Promote faithfulness to Christ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent Living by Gary L. Hauck</td>
<td>Titus &amp; Philemon</td>
<td>Achieving consistent Christlike living.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New and Living Way by Daniel J. Evans</td>
<td>Hebrews</td>
<td>Submitting ourselves to Christ, the climax of God’s promise of salvation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith in Action by David W. Davidson</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Living faith is living faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing in God’s True Graces by LBP Staff</td>
<td>1 Peter</td>
<td>Handling the trials of life by the grace of God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Assurance of Eternal Life by Daniel J. Evans</td>
<td>1 John</td>
<td>Believers can know for certain that they are saved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remember These Things by Jack Riggs</td>
<td>2 Peter, 3 John, Jude</td>
<td>Christians must value God’s truth in hard times.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topical Studies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Distinctives of Baptism by Donald K. Anderson &amp; David M. Geiser</td>
<td>Baptist distinctives</td>
<td>Discover what Baptists believe and why.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundations for the Family by Dan &amp; Martha Tyler</td>
<td>Family life</td>
<td>Biblical principles for the Christian home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God’s Plan Past, Present, Future by James J. Day</td>
<td>Dispensation</td>
<td>For christians, the fulfillment and expectation of the Lord’s return.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lessons of Christian Life by a Panel of Writers</td>
<td>Bible survey</td>
<td>This section provides for the student, the church member, and the layman an introduction to the Bible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Victory Side by a Panel of Writers</td>
<td>Spiritual conflict</td>
<td>Victory is the power of the Lord to triumph over sin and Satan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation: God’s Great and Glorious Gift by Ernest Pickering</td>
<td>Doctrines of salvation</td>
<td>Study of sin, the terms of God’s plan, and salvation in daily life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Book We Love by Wallace Atkinson &amp; David W. Davidson</td>
<td>History of the Scriptures</td>
<td>Study the Book’s literary structure, and principles of interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Work of the Church by David W. Davidson</td>
<td>The local church</td>
<td>Challenges Christians to worship and serve God through the church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embody Truths from the Tabernacle by John R. Moore</td>
<td>Grace and the tabernacle</td>
<td>Study the tabernacle and learn of God’s grace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant by H. Joseph Miller</td>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>Discover your responsibilities and accountability as a child of God.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Adult Electives—New Format

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title &amp; Author</th>
<th>Book or Topic</th>
<th>Course Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Testament Studies</td>
<td>Revelation</td>
<td>Revelation: Believers can find present hope from knowing God's plan for the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transforming Grace</td>
<td>Romans</td>
<td>A study of the need for and provision of grace and how the grace life is to be lived.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topical Studies</td>
<td>Doctrine of God</td>
<td>Doctrine of God: A practical study of our God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who &amp; God?</td>
<td>Ezra and Nehemiah</td>
<td>A study of Godly leadership practices for all believers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influential Leadership</td>
<td>Christian Being</td>
<td>Christian Being: Believers can actually shine through successful times.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Grounded and Growing Adult Series (Schaumburg, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 2000), insert*
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


“A Profile of Older Americans.” U.S. Administration on Aging.  

Anderson, Margaret J. You Can Enjoy Your Aging Parents. St. Louis:  

Boice, James Montgomery. Foundations of the Christian Faith. Downers Grove, IL:  
InterVarsity, 1986.

Brookfield, Stephen D. Understanding and Facilitating Adult Learning. San Francisco:  


Byrne, H. W. A Christian Approach To Education. Milford, MI: Mott Media, 1977,


The Church’s Educational Ministry: A Curriculum Plan. St. Louis: Bethany Press,  
1966.

Colson, Howard P. and Raymond M. Rigdon. Understanding Your Church’s Curriculum.  

“Current Population Reports: Americans with Disabilities, 2000.” Census Bureau and  
the National Center on Health Statistics.  

“Current Population Reports: Educational Attainment in the United States, March,  


__________. *The 7 Laws of the Teacher*. Walk Thru the Bible Ministries (videotape set).


VITA

Homer Massey

PERSONAL
Born: May 11, 1939
Married: Mary Elizabeth Strang, August 1, 1964
Children: Paul Homer, born June 14, 1965
           Elizabeth Joy, born February 15, 1970
Grandchildren: Seven

EDUCATIONAL
B.A. Bob Jones University, 1963
M.A.R. Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989
M.Div. Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 1998

MINISTERIAL
Ordination: November 23, 1958, Calvary Baptist Church, Marietta, Georgia

PROFESSIONAL
Assistant Pastor, Faith Memorial Baptist Church, Richmond, Virginia, 1964-1965
Instructor, Virginia Bible College, Norfolk, Virginia, 1965-1969
Senior Pastor, Cypress Chapel, Suffolk, Virginia, 1969-1972
Associate Pastor, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Elizabeth City, North Carolina, 1972-1975
Associate Pastor, Tabernacle Baptist Church, and Dean, Tabernacle Baptist Bible Institute, Virginia Beach, Virginia, 1975-1984
Senior Pastor, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Elizabeth City, North Carolina, 1984-1987
Associate Staff Pastor, Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Virginia, 1987-1990
Academic Advisor, Liberty University School of Lifelong Learning, 1990
Instructor, Liberty University School of Religion, 1991-1995
Assistant Professor, Liberty University School of Religion, 1996-
Associate Registrar for the External Degree Program of Liberty University, 2001 - 2002
Assistant Professor, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002 –