

3.2 How can we discover life needs?

How can teachers discover their pupils' needs—the things they need to learn, the questions they are wondering about, the points at which they need to grow? Usually, not by asking them! People are slow to recognize their spiritual needs, and even more reluctant to reveal them.

Even if there is good rapport between pupil and teacher, most students will not go to their teachers for help. Therefore, teachers must learn how to uncover their pupils' needs.

Get to know your students.

First, teachers need to find some way get to know their students. Obviously this is much easier in a small class than in a large one, but every teacher should make a diligent attempt. Encourage your teachers to do this through class visitation. They might also visit the schools their students attend, get to know the teachers and what the students are learning in school.

Get to know typical age-level characteristics.

Another way to help your teachers get to know students is to provide books on age-level characteristics. Lend them out, and at a departmental meeting discuss ways you can use these characteristics to teach more effectively.

Use a questionnaire or survey

Another way of finding pupil needs is by using an occasional questionnaire or survey. The students should not sign their names, so they should feel free to express their doubts and shortcomings.

Ask personal questions such as, "How often do you read your Bible? What magazines and books do you like? Do you believe that your prayers are answered?" Also leave a space for pupils to write in any questions they'd like Sunday school lessons to answer.

Tabulate the results yourself and share this information with other teachers. Then think about how you can answer students' questions in upcoming lessons.

Your example will influence others.

The example you as a teacher set in showing interest in pupils will influence your entire program. Use time before and after the program to visit with pupils, to get to know them, and to express genuine interest in their lives. Also visit in their homes and schools.

By teaching, training and example, you can encourage other teachers also to care deeply about their students and to make that care known. You can develop a class that meets real pupil needs, and does not merely answer academic questions that no one is asking.

Love——a life need for everyone.

A little boy was once asked why he went clear across town to a certain Sunday school, passing many other churches on the way that would have been far easier to get to. The boy replied, "Because they love a fellow over there." People will be attracted to your class when you love them and show it.

LET'S REVIEW

Tell two ways you can learn the life needs of your students.

1. _____

2. _____

What is one life need we all have? _____

LET’S PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

How much do you know about the life needs of your students? Make a list of things they are wondering about, topics they are interested in, confusions that need to be cleared up, points at which they need to grow.

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We have given ideas about discovering the life needs of your students. Which ones do you think will work well here in your culture? Why?

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What other ideas do you have for finding the needs of students here?

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