

# It's All In A Name!

*How to select names and develop descriptions that WORK for new or existing Sunday School Classes*

I responded to a question from a pastor recently asking about how to select a name and describe a new Sunday School class for young married couples which they were about to start. The principles that informed my answer are universal, and may be of interest to anyone thinking about starting new units or renaming existing units in your Sunday School in order to help guests or newcomers be able to find a class that fits them.

*"Pastor, regarding your question about a new class you're wanting to start targeting young married couples and asking for some guidelines for describing and naming it..."*

First, unless your church has an active and effective ministry reaching single adults in this age group, it is very important not to list or describe this class as "married or couples", because 50% of the adults in your city\* are single, never married, divorced, living alone, single parents, married but for a variety of reasons always attend Sunday School alone, or some combination of these. To describe a class as a "*couples*" class automatically excludes half of your adult population, when what we really usually mean is "adults" in a certain age range. The truth is, we would never knowingly or purposely turn away a separated or divorced man or woman who wanted to study God's Living Word or who needed the grace and ministry available through a group like this. But labeling a group as "young married" or "young couples" will do so. *I strongly encourage churches to take a look at all of their adult classes and examine how many times we could realistically remove "couples" or "married" from the description or title while still accurately describing the group. (Example: From "Couples - 50's & 60's", it's so easy to rename a group to "50's & 60's" or "Coed- 50's & 60's")*

*\*this is true for practically every city in Texas, where this author lives, and is, within a few percentage points, for almost every city/town in the U.S. as well.*

Also, because so many young adults today are putting off marriage until their late 20's to early 30's, you'll limit participation of those who have not yet married if you call it a couples class or young married class.

SO... all that to say, here are some good suggestions put into practice by many growing churches:

- *Describe the characteristics of those you're trying to reach - example: adults in their 20's and 30's, married or single*
- *Names of classes should refrain from using systems that are symbolic for us, but have no meaning whatsoever to those who are visiting or new to the church - example: "The Ruth Class", or "The Tom Smith Memorial Class".*
- *Use names that are descriptive enough that we can figure out who's in there via the name - example: - "The Odds & Ends Class", or "Singles with a Purpose", or "NearlyWeds & NewlyWeds", or "New Parents Class", etc.*
- *Descriptions should be brief and helpful for those who are trying to decide between one or more classes. Because of that, use similar criteria to describe all of the available classes, rather than letting classes provide their own descriptions. And we don't need to know the name of the teachers (changes too often, and newcomers won't know anything about them, anyway...) Example: Young Adults Class - married and/or single, 20's & 30's, this coed class is a fun & engaging learning experience and regularly engages in mission projects in our city. Rm LC14, 9:45am (See attached map to find the LC building)*
- *Consider the real possibility that newcomers will be reading the list of available options with no help from you or anyone else and trying to determine if your church offers anything that would be of interest them.*

Consider these two options being read by a young unmarried but engaged couple, new to your city:

### **Option A:**

- **The Paul Class** - Teacher, Fred McAllister - 9:30am - Smith Memorial Classroom
  - **The Timothy Class** - Teacher, Tim Jones - 9:30am - Handy Room
  - **The Ruth Class** - Teacher, Mrs. Melody Smith - 9:30am - The Harmony Makers Room
  - **The Huntsmen** - Teacher, Dr. Franklin Moore - 8am - The Parlor
- etc. etc, you get the picture. If they showed up on Sunday, would they know anything about who's in which room, or how to get there?

### **Option B:**

- **Hitched\*** - a class for nearly-weds and newly-weds in their 20's or 30's. - 9:45am - LC Rm 14 (see map)
- **Hatched\*** - A class for brand new or expectant parents - of ANY age - 9:45am - LC 16
- **Young and Loving it** - A class for young-median adults, married or single - 30's - 40's - LC 18
- **Newbies** - A class for folks new to us, new to the faith, or just dipping their toe in to check it out - Sanctuary rm 3  
(a room off the back of the sanctuary - it's labeled)
- **Been/Done** - Boomers & Beyond - Adults 50's - 75 (Or whatever. We're easy) Loosely defined, tightly connected - Fellowship Hall Classroom 4 (see map)
- Etc.

*\*These really are the names of existing or planned classes at Texas Baptist churches such as FBC Corsicana\* and others.*

Now, honestly, if you were brand new to the area, or to the church, and got ahold of either of those, here's what we've learned: Guests are much more likely visit a church where they have enough information to actually **know** what to expect and where to go when they get there. So we should be careful how we describe our classes, ALL of our classes, AND, we should make these descriptions available online, so people can make decisions BEFORE they arrive. The more helpful, accurate, informative material like this potential guests can find online, often PRIOR to their visit, will raise the likelihood they will actually visit and participate not only in worship, but in a bible study group as well. Especially today, guests will visit your church virtually, via your website, before ever stepping foot through your doors. Do all you can to provide the information they seek so they will know where to go and will feel right at home when they do visit.

***It's all in a name*** (and a description). Honestly and helpfully name and describe the options guests have available to them so they will be able to successfully navigate the opportunities you have provided to them to get connected with your church family, come to Christ, and serve the Lord.



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