

Baptist Basics University
Truth Must Be Preserved For Future Generations

Bus Ministry 101
Lecture Notes

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Lesson 1

Introduction

Perhaps the greatest tool of our generation in reaching children has been the Bus Ministry. Thousands upon thousands have been reached and countless lives affected through it. It has brought many children under the sound of the Gospel that would have never otherwise even darkened a church door.

The window of opportunity for reaching children grows smaller each passing year. There was a time that you could easily reach kids for Christ until the age of twelve. I think that age today is probably ten. Satan is enslaving kids sooner and sooner into lives of sin. It is absolutely mind blowing what kids today know and have experienced. Things that High Schoolers were rarely doing a decade ago are now commonplace for kids under ten.

If we are going to reach our generation for Christ, we must go after the children. Here is where the harvest is ripe and ready. Here is where hearts are open and minds receptive.

Have you ever been in a service where people were asked at what age they were saved? It is astounding how many in our churches today were reached before they became teenagers. I personally was saved at the age of four.

My Personal Experience

I had a nominal relationship with our Bus Ministry as I was growing up. I often visited on Saturday mornings and would sometimes ride a bus to help out. My Dad has worked on and drove for many routes. However, I was really not that involved in the work of this ministry.

When I went to college at Commonwealth Baptist College, I soon found myself working in bus routes after a short stint in the Spanish Ministry (that's a different and very odd story). I was soon helping a friend of mine, Kevin Spears, who was starting a brand new bus route. It was part of an experiment they were doing in trying to run buses on Saturday. He named the bus the "Bible Baptist Bus", but we usually just went by "3B".

It was hard going at first. We didn't exactly have the greatest area for a bus route to get started in: a middle class area around the church. We slowly began to grow, and we were averaging somewhere around forty riders after a couple of years. I did a lot of everything on that bus, such as running to doors, crowd control, comic relief, and directing the many different drivers we had.

Upon returning for my Junior year at school, I was given the opportunity of becoming a bus captain for one of three brand new routes. This also was sort of an experiment, in that these routes were staffed with all college students (with the exception of some drivers). Once again I found myself working a middle class area. My route area actually tripled in size after one of the other routes moved to a better area and we took on another adjacent area. One thing I was blessed with was that I had some very tremendous and talented workers. It took a few weeks but we finally started running ten or so riders consistently. After many months we finally started averaging in the twenties. When I graduated and handed the bus route over to

another college student, we had started averaging in the thirties and had run hit forty a couple of times if I remember correctly.

We had by no means the largest bus route, but I feel like we did do a lot of things right. We had a great group of faithful kids who came week after week. We had very little problems with discipline issues. We were able to reach many kids for Christ and make an impact in those young lives.

Since coming back to Texas after college, I have found myself once again in the bus ministry. Our county is a very rural one and we run more vans than buses. I have a van route to an area that at one time supported a very good bus route. Things have changed out there somewhat, but we have finally started seeing a nucleus of faithful riders develop and have been able to find more kids willing to ride.

I haven't said all this to lift myself up. I am not a great bus captain. What I want to show you is that I have experience in many facets and types of bus ministries. I have worked urban and rural routes, large and small. I have been on established routes and on fledgling ones as well. I have personally helped to start two bus routes from the ground up and have helped to revive one that had dried up.

I feel that with this experience I can be a help to you. Whether you are in a large city or a small town, I have been there and know some of the nuances of both. I have dealt with many of the problems you have faced.

Furthermore, I have tried to be a student of some great bus captains. I was around some of the best you will find at Clays Mill Road Baptist Church. I was able to see what routes did that would have one hundred riders. I was able to see programs and promotions that worked well. I was able to see how effective bus workers reached their riders.

My Goal

My goal in this course is to challenge and instruct you in running an effective bus route. Let me show you the "why's" and "how's" of the bus ministry and pass on some tricks and tips I have learned. I hope that I can help you to be a more effective bus worker so that you can reach your area for Christ.

Lesson 2

Some Basics

The Bus Ministry is a fairly simple ministry to run. Basically it consists of getting kids to and from church. Anything else is just a corollary to that simple definition. We visit to see who is riding, we try to find more kids to ride, we get them to church, they hear the Word of God, and we take them home.

Bus Ministries come in all sizes. Smaller churches may have a single van or bus, while large churches may have a fleet of buses. Some may have five or ten riders, others will have hundreds or even thousands. Really it just depends on the size of your church, the amount of work you can put into it, and the area you have to work. It would be difficult to run hundreds in a town of five thousand, but it would be very easy to do so in a town of five hundred thousand.

If you are starting this ministry from scratch, you need to keep the three "F"s in mind:

- **Finances**

Can you afford to run buses? It costs money to run buses. This ministry will not pay for itself. You need to buy, insure, maintain, and repair vehicles. Gas isn't getting any cheaper, either!!!

- **Faculty**

Do you have people to work the routes and teach the kids when you get them to church? Every bus route should have at least two workers including the driver. You can probably put the bus kids in your regular Sunday School and Children's Church programs. You may need to run a separate program for them. You need teachers and workers for all this.

- **Facilities**

Do you have a place for the kids to go? If your church is already packed out, you may need to wait to start this ministry or schedule them for a time other than your regular service.

Here's a few quick points I want to hit before we get very far into this course...

- **Most Riders Will Be From Lower Class Neighborhoods**

In every community there is a need to reach young people. However, some areas will produce larger bus routes. Urban areas with a lot of apartment complexes will create very large bus routes. A rural area consisting of many small towns probably won't. Your bus routes will be a reflection of your community.

Don't expect to build a bus route with middle or upper class kids. The areas you will do the most good in are on the "other side of the track". A while back someone told me that they didn't even pick up a kid on their route that lived in a brick home.

Yes, somebody needs to reach middle class kids. You can reach them, but I prefer to get the most return for my efforts. This is especially true for when just getting started. Once you get a route off the ground, then devote some time to these areas.

- **Slow Growth is Most Common and Probably Best**

Don't be discouraged if you don't fill up a bus in a week or two. It takes a lot of time and effort to build a bus route. I will tell you from experience that the best growth is slow growth. When a route takes off like wildfire, it is just about as wild and crazy as a wildfire. Slowly building a route lets kids get plugged into your program. It is very hard to even run a program if there is a large percentage of new riders.

- **Your Attendance Will Fluctuate**

Keep in mind that bus routes will fluctuate. You may have thirty riders one week then only twenty the week after that. You can also have a week where no one rides. I have been there. Don't let the lows get you down, but let the high days motivate and challenge you.

- **Do Set Goals**

Do set goals for your route. It gives you something to shoot for. Be realistic with them however, because you will probably never get fifty new riders in one week.

Someone once said to set goals on the effort you put in and not on the results. That does go very well in the Bus Ministry. You have no control over who gets on your bus on Sunday morning, but you do have control over how many new houses you stop at on Saturday morning. Nevertheless, I do like having a goal set for how many riders I'd like to see ride. A general rule of thumb is that each hour of visiting supports ten riders.

Lesson 3

Workers and Responsibilities

Like any other ministry, the bus ministry needs a leadership hierarchy. If you do not have leadership, you will only have confusion. There are simply too many areas to cover to not have people in charge over them.

A Bus Route is one area where you can too many workers very easily. Because of the confined space, you have to be fairly selective as to how many workers you allow. It is also a great “starter ministry” that you can get young people in the church involved with. However, don't let these young workers be nothing more than older bus kids.

Everyone on your bus needs a job to be doing. If they do not, they usually become older bus kids in their behavior. I've seen some “workers” be bigger distractions than kids.

Also, every worker (except for the driver) needs to be in charge of maintaining order in their immediate area and encouraging kids to participate in the program. With this in mind, workers need to be spread out throughout the bus.

Here's a rundown of the various workers you will need or ones that you may want:

- **Bus Director**

This person is in charge of all facets of the bus ministry. They answer directly to the Pastor. This person organizes, promotes, maintains, motivates, delegates, and so much more. All bus captains and workers answer to them.

- **Driver**

This is the most important job in the Bus ministry. If it wasn't for their work, you could not have the route.

Bus drivers need to be adequately licensed and safe. Since they usually do not have that much direct interaction with kids, being a “kid person” is not always applicable. They do need to have some patience and a tolerance for noise and chaos.

You need to bend over backwards to accommodate your driver. If there is something happening on the bus that makes them uncomfortable then you need to fix it so that they are comfortable. Kill them with kindness. They are too often overlooked in their effort and sacrifice in the ministry.

- **Bus Captain**

This is the head honcho on an individual route. It is their responsibility to see that every aspect of the Bus Route goes smoothly.

The Bus Captain doesn't have to be necessarily the person who leads the program or is the "face" of the ministry. They can be the driver or anybody else. It also doesn't have to be one person, such as having a pair of "co-captains".

- **Runners**

This is a person who "runs" (not walks) to the doors when picking up kids. They should be quick about their business and friendly at the doors. This is a great position for teens.

- **Program Leader**

Someone, Captain or not, needs to be leading a program on the bus. Remember my "should-be-famous" saying - "If you don't have a program, the kids will". Sing songs, play games, preach, or just do something. It builds excitement, prevents discipline problems, and passes the time more quickly. You have a captive audience for all that time that you can present your message to.

- **Bouncer**

If you have a large route you will probably want at least one person who is responsible for keeping the peace and dealing with unruly kids. They need to be consistent and not try to be everyone's buddy one minute and then scold them the next. This isn't a fun position but a very vital one.

- **Roll Taker**

You need to be keeping track of who rides your bus. Part of this is just good record keeping, but it is also to prevent a huge problem should you have a really major incident occur. This person needs to get the kids name when they get on the bus, and get vital information from new riders (name, address, phone number, etc.).

Lesson 4

Starting a New Route

If you are just getting started or are expanding your current ministry, you will probably be starting new routes. I personally have had first hand experience at this, and while I know I am not a great bus captain I have learned much that will be a big help to you.

• **Choosing Your Area**

Your bus route is only as good as its area. You will want to find an area that will support a bus route without having to drive miles between stops. Some things to look for in an area:

- Lower to Middle Class Neighborhoods
- Apartments, if any
- Trailer parks, if any
- Nearby elementary schools
- Reasonable distance from church

I think each bus route's area needs to be mapped out with boundaries. In a rural setting, it may just be the west part of your town or this one whole community. In a large city, it could be very defined, such as “between Main Street and Oak Street from 4th to 6th Avenues”. Doing this gives you an area to focus attention on and keeps routes from overlapping.

• **Finding Workers**

The best source for a Bus Captain is to find someone who is an exceptional worker on another route. If there isn't one, you can often find somebody from other ministries.

I like leaving it up to the individual Captains to staff their routes. They can find people they are comfortable with and that they trust. The one position that it is probably best to have in place for them is the driver.

• **First Visits**

When just starting, don't worry about knocking on every door. That is a noble goal but it is a brutally slow way to grow a route. “Spot knock” all across you area first. Look for houses that have kids and visit there. It's pretty easy to do, just look for toys, pets, minivans, wore out lawns, etc.

If I knock on a door and they aren't interested in letting their kids ride or they don't have kids, if the person is friendly I will ask them about other kids in the neighborhood. Most people are more than willing to help you and will tell you where kids live, which ones go to church, and which houses to avoid. This saves a great deal of time and effort.

One thing I do like to use is permission slips. Have the parents sign these before the kids get on. I'm sure that it could possibly help in some legal matter down the road, but hopefully that never happens. I like them because they give you a chance to really go over with

the parents what you do in your program. I really like that up front honesty and I find that parents really appreciate it also.

As a side note on permission slips, I don't recommend getting permission for baptisms on your permission slip. My experience is that it is much better to do this completely separate and only as needed. Doing so up front puts a lot of pressure on the parents, leads to parents being confused, and robs you of a great witnessing opportunity with parents. I'll discuss this more in a later lesson.

- **Use Promotions Heavily**

Promotions are to a bus route what fertilizer is to plants. Use really big promotions the first four or so weeks and then taper off. The added incentive of the promotion will help draw riders.

- **Let Kids Find Kids**

Encourage and reward kids for bringing visitors. Kids know where kids live and they are more than happy to bring their friends. This works extremely well when (1) kids are having a good time and (2) you are rewarding them for bringing visitors.

- **Try to Stay Positive**

Starting a brand new route is an extremely difficult task. It is very easy to become discouraged if growth isn't developing quickly. The first few weeks are going to be very difficult for running a program as kids are learning you and your songs. You can do it with patience and prayer.

Lesson 5

Running a Program

Nothing does more good on a Bus Route than having a good program running while the kids are on the bus. You have a captive audience for that time while they are riding, so take the opportunity to teach and train them. Besides, you will drastically cut down on your discipline problems when you do.

• Singing

The easiest and probably best program is just to have someone lead the kids in singing. This gets the kids involved and keeps their attention on you. You can really have a lot of fun with this.

For the ride to church, I recommend singing a lot of upbeat songs then taper off with a few slow ones before you get to the church. It really doesn't matter so much when you are dropping the kids off. Either time you need to start off with a song that really gets the kids attention.

I like songs that you can really sing out and incorporate motions. In fact, most of the slower songs I use have motions to them as well. This really gets the kids involved and adds a lot of excitement. Do try to keep it relatively sane for safety reasons though.

If you have never led a program like this or for that long of a time, I recommend using a song list. It doesn't necessarily have to be in order and can be nothing more than a list of songs on a 3x5 card. After a while, your confidence will build up and you can "wing it".

I really prefer going off the cuff because I have learned how to pick songs based on the situation. If you are losing your kids' attention, you can quickly switch to a military style cadence to draw them back in. If things are getting a little crazy, you can start toning things down through your song selection.

As far as song lists go, I do keep a list of songs handy most of the time. I keep a list of songs (it's attached to the end of these lessons) in my Bible that the kids and I know. Next to the songs I have rated them based on tempo and excitement. Songs with "X" are slow songs and while songs with "XXX" are very fast and lively. This simple tool can help you spot appropriate songs quickly.

• Games

Next to songs, you can do a lot with games. You can do this many different ways, from simple games with just one person playing to activities that get everyone on the bus involved. I personally like to have a big game for the ride home and small, quick games for the trip to the church.

I've done many games that require just a couple of contestants. One of my favorites is to see who can eat "X" pieces of candy the fastest. A similar game uses drinking soft drinks.

You can even just dare a kid that you can make them laugh, and then do all kinds of nonsense until they do.

I like to have games that get everyone involved. A real simple one that I use is to give candy out to the first person who can spot something. I'll announce what we are looking for and then give candy to whoever spots it first. Good things to look for include dogs, boats, road kill, white trucks, police cars, and certain letters or numbers.

You can also play actual games that get everyone involved. One that I saw used, and works well with a full bus, is to take a pool "noodle" and bring it up and over each seat. The kids have to work together and pass it off to the next row. This works well to have races between the sides of the bus.

The only thing you need to be really concerned with is safety. Whatever you play, the kids really need to stay in their seats. Also try to use props that safe.

- **Preach**

Many people preach on their buses. Honestly, this has not worked very well for me. There are too many distractions outside of the bus's windows for they kids to stay focused on you. There is also a tremendous amount of noise coming from the bus itself and you will strain your voice trying to make yourself heard over it all. Perhaps it will work for you, but it never really did for me.

As a side note here, don't try to give long speeches during your program. It is very difficult to talk over the noise of the bus and you start losing the kids' attention very quickly. Split up announcements and such between songs.

Lesson 6

Promotions and Programs

Promotions work very well when used on Bus Routes. There is practically no end to what you can do. Money isn't even that big of an issue since there are many things you can do that do not cost a dime.

Your goal in using promotions is to build excitement. It's an added bonus for coming to church. You can also use them as rewards.

I think you should use promotions often, but not so often that kids expect something every week. When overused, kids will pick and choose which days they come. You then end up with a "big day" route, which spikes in attendance on big promotions but levels out at a much lower average on other days. Kids also come to expect that every week there should be something. I don't want to spoil them, but I do want to encourage them to come.

I do recommend a maybe a couple of time a year doing a big push by grouping a bunch of promotions into a program. These work great in the Spring or Fall. This lets you build excitement week to week and encourage faithful attendance.

Something I like doing was to incorporate a contest in with a program. Something that I enjoyed doing was giving "points" for various things, like attending, bringing a Bible, and bringing a friend. I would announce every week the standings so that everyone knew where they stood. At the end of the contest I would give away a big prize to the top boy and top girl.

When you do have a promotion, program, or contest, you really need to be able to let the kids know about it. You can build up anything a week in advance, and really big things two to four weeks in advance. I recommend making up fliers to give out when visiting that advertise the current promotion. These are also very handy to leave at doors if no one is home.

Here are a few promotions that I have seen work extremely well. They may be a little expensive, but they are fantastic.

- **Pizza Party**

Order enough pizzas for everyone to have a couple of slices. Kids go nuts over it.

- **Pumpkin Sunday**

This works very well right before Halloween. Give every kid that rides their very own pumpkin.

- **Pony Rides**

A few less expensive ideas include:

- **Candy Toss**

Buy a bunch of candy and throw it out to the kids. Great to do before you get on the bus to go home.

- **Giant Pickle Day**

Give out giant dill pickles.

- **Bubble Gum Blowing Contest**

Give prizes to the kids who can blow the biggest bubbles

- **Goldfish Day**

Give everyone their very own goldfish. A lot of workers will also swallow them for added excitement. I have avoided going that far up to this point and do not even recommend it.

A few ideas that are free or really close to it:

- **“I Love Jesus” Day**

Everyone should come because they love Jesus. Yes, it's pretty cheesy...

- **Clown Day**

Have somebody dress up like a clown and make balloon animals. You can do very similar things with other “special guests”.

- **Water War**

Have a big water gun fight, water balloon fight, or just the kids throw water balloons at the Bus Captain.

There are also many evangelists and workers out there who have great promotions. There are many people who clown and some who do carnivals. These work extremely well and are great use once or twice a year for really big days.

Lesson 7

Weekly Visitation

Every rider or solid prospect should be visited in person every week if humanly possible. I don't care how faithful they are, you need to make an appearance at their door each week.

There are some times where this is just not possible. Depending on where you are, you probably are going to run into weather problems such as snow and ice that can keep you from making your rounds. Don't try to kill yourself visiting in such conditions. On days such as this phone calls are absolutely acceptable.

Since we're on the subject of phone numbers, you need to get phone numbers and contact information for every rider. This is good policy, and especially in the unlikely event that someone gets hurt or other emergency. It is also good to be able to call if the decision is made at the last minute that you cannot run your route for whatever reason. In fact, every stop should have a number to contact you with as well. I print my cell phone number on fliers every now and then just so people will have it.

Another question that is often asked is just when is the best time to visit. Most of the time this is on Saturday morning after 10:00 AM. If you go much earlier than that you will wake many people up. Saturday can be a busy day for many families, so you probably won't get with everyone on this day. I prefer not to visit regular riders any earlier than Friday. Kids will forget that you stopped by if you go any earlier in the week. However, you can have success at finding new riders at just about any time during the week.

How long you stay out visiting really depends on your route. A general rule of thumb is that one hour of visiting is good for ten riders that week. Usually you can visit a route in a few hours.

Let's run through what to do and what you need each week...

• **Weekly Meeting**

You should have a weekly bus meeting to rally your troops for battle. Get all your captains and workers together for a quick organizational meeting before your scheduled visiting time. This is a great time to do some training or motivation.

• **Fliers**

You need to have fliers to leave at doors where people were not home. A good flier will have any upcoming or current promotion on it, a space to write the time you'll be by on Sunday morning, and the address and phone number of the church. If you print your own, you may want to include a personal number so people can call you directly. I know some people will just leave church tracts, but this does not work very well.

You don't necessarily have to have a new flier every week, but you do need some variety. I like to keep a stack of "generic" fliers that say nothing about a promotion on them. Whenever the church had these while I was in college I would gather up as many as I could. If you are having a program or promotion, you need to have a special flier to advertise it.

As far as making fliers, you can do it in simple word processing programs like Microsoft Word or even Microsoft Works. I would use a program that I could at least make the fonts prettier and include pictures or graphics of some type. Programs like Print Shop and Microsoft Publisher work very well. You don't have to print color fliers, but I would print "black and white" ones on colored paper. They also don't have to be a full 8½ x11 sheet of paper. You can easily fit two side by side in a "landscape" layout.

You want to especially leave fliers at the doors of homes where you did not talk to anyone while visiting that week. I like to give fliers even to the people I do talk to if there is something special mentioned on them like a promotion. You may also want to leave them at doors while making new stops if no one is home.

- **Visit Regulars Every Week**

I like to start my Saturday morning visiting by stopping at all my regular riders' homes. You don't need to spend a lot of time at these doors every week, but taking some extra time every now and then is perfectly fine. Basically all you do at these stops is to check and see if they will be riding on Sunday and to remind them of any promotion.

- **Don't Pass on Opportunities**

Every now and then you will come across an opportunity to witness to someone or to sign up new riders. Don't get too wrapped up in your visiting that you are blind to these opportunities. If you get a chance to do some good, by all means do it!

- **Make New Stops Last**

By doing this, you will be more apt to catch people at home on Saturday since it will be a little later into the day. Also, it is more important to get by your regulars than to make new stops. Don't neglect what you have for what you want!

I've covered in other sections on finding new riders so I want go into it here. I will remind you to set a goal for this visiting to stay motivated and focused. After your initial survey of the area, I recommend starting a systematic program to cover your area. If possible, try to knock every door once a year.

Lesson 8

Salvations and Baptisms

If you are doing your job as a bus captain, you will see kids saved. We Baptists believe that once someone is saved they need to be baptized. I am not going to go into a doctrinal defense of our position here, but I want to deal with some practical issues involving salvations and baptisms.

Lee Roberson once told someone that if people are not being saved either one of two things has happened: either the Gospel is not being preached or the Gospel has lost its power. The latter has not and will not happen. The problem then lies with us preaching the Gospel

Kids can and will get saved at many different points of your program. You could lead them to Christ while visiting, during the bus ride, in Sunday School, during Children's Church, or during special activities. The only reasons kids will not get saved are if you don't present the Gospel or give them an opportunity to be saved.

You need to have a record system in your church to record and report salvations. If someone gets saved in Children's Church or Sunday School, that child's bus captain needs to know by the next time he visits his route. It's best if he knows before leaving the church that day to take kids home if possible.

Bus captains ought to make a big deal about salvations. Announce it on the bus and tell the child's parents about their decision.

Once a child is saved, they ought to be baptized if at all possible. The best policy is to not baptize a minor (person under 18 years of age) without a parent's written permission. This saves you a lot of headaches and gives you a great opportunity to witness to parents.

A question that is often asked is how soon should you try to get a child baptized. There is really not a good answer to that question. The Bible gives us the precedent that baptism should be immediate or very soon after salvation. With kids, you do not want to rush things. Also you will want to make sure that they got it settled. I very often see kids, especially younger ones, come down in Children's Church for three or four straight weeks even though I really think they had it settled the first time. However, I am not the judge. This is a very good reason to perhaps delay baptism for a week or so.

The next thing we need to do is secure permission from the child's parents. They had a full page permission slip at Clays Mill Road Baptist Church that I really liked. It explained what it meant to be saved and about being baptized. It even included illustrations showing baptism and its meaning. It was a great tool for explaining to parents about baptism. Regardless of what you use, you need to have signed and dated permission.

As I mentioned briefly in a previous lesson, I think permission for baptism should only be obtained as it is needed. I do not like getting permission before the kids are saved, and especially not when you sign them up to ride for the first time. I have lost riders over confusion stemming from up front permission for baptism. Most parents will not remember giving that permission.

I will admit one positive thing about getting up front permission is that it usually increases your number of baptisms. We all have a tendency to not properly deal with baptisms and this allows for kids to get baptized as soon as they are saved. However, my experience is that the negatives far out weigh the positives.

There are just too many reasons to get permission as needed. It makes the whole experience more personal. It also gives you an opportunity to witness to parents while them peace of mind knowing that you are honest and up front about what you are doing in your program. This opens the door to allow parents, family, and friends to attend the child's baptism, which allows for a great outreach opportunity. It is also much simpler to keep track of who has permission to be baptized in my opinion.

I am not going to go into details here about dealing with kids regarding salvation or the actual act of baptism. I feel that those are areas that should be covered in detail in other courses.

Lesson 9

Finding New Riders

I have never met an effective bus captain that wasn't on the hunt for new riders. They constantly are knocking new doors and promoting bringing visitors. A bus captain that isn't interested in finding new riders needs to be replaced.

New riders are new opportunities to make an impact in someone's life for Christ. Usually new riders have not made any profession of faith in Christ, and more often than not they have little church background.

Keep in mind that the Bus Ministry is really a miracle. Why would parents send their kids with a complete stranger to a place they have never been? But they will and they do! It is really humbling to think of what it is that they are entrusting you with.

When you are looking for new riders, you are truly looking for "prospects". First you are looking for people. Then you are looking for people with kids. Then you are looking for people with kids that would be interested in letting their kids come to church. Then you are looking for people with kids that would be interested in letting their kids come to church but the kids will actually ride the bus. By the time you have worked your way down to them, you will have talked to a lot of people.

There are three basic ways to get new riders:

- Have them come to you.
- You find them
- Have kids find them

The first of these is the least effective. You can advertise all you want, but kids very, very rarely come to you for rides to church. I know a man who did this out of honest ignorance. He put up fliers, one parent called them, and they picked one kid up. I'm surprised he did that good.

The second one is the one that needs the most attention. You can find new riders out visiting. New people are moving into your area all the time and each one is a new opportunity. Always be on the lookout for kids playing in the yard or moving vans.

The last one is very effective, but you cannot rely completely on it. Kids will bring friends if they enjoy your program and if you promote it. Give away prizes to visitors and the ones that brought them. The best time to really push for this is during a program or for a really big promotion.

Here's some more tips on finding new riders:

- **Expand to a New Area**

Try to find an area near or in your route that isn't already being covered. This is pretty easy to do when you are just starting out. If you part of a very large ministry, this may be difficult because you will probably have well defined areas.

Do be conscious of time constraints if you do this. You need to keep a reasonable pickup and drop off time.

- **Re-knock High Turn Over Areas**

Some areas constantly have people moving in and out. Apartments are very susceptible to this. A lot of times you can go back through these every few months.

Do be careful not to over do this. You can really annoy people in settled areas of town by dropping by every other weekend. A pretty good rule of thumb is to knock every house in your area once a year if possible.

- **Take a Kid Visiting With You**

Kids that have lived in a neighborhood for a while know where almost all the kids live. If you have a rider that you can trust and if their parents don't object, take them visiting with you. Let them point you to the houses where kids are. A lot of times parents are much more willing to let their kids ride the bus if they other kids in the area are as well.

- **Remember "Slow Growth"**

"Slow growth is usually the best growth." Don't expect to double your route in one afternoon of visiting. Praise God if you do, but I guarantee that you will have a wild bus ride on Sunday.

I think it is best to set a goal of knocking "X" amount of new doors a week. Whether it is five, ten, twenty, or more, it keeps you motivated and prevents laziness.

- **Remember to Talk to Parents**

In today's world you have to be very careful with how you interact with kids. Honestly, it is probably best to bypass talking to kids in the yard and go straight for the door. In fact, it may even be best to go back when there are no kids in the yard. It is an uncomfortable position to be in when a parent who does not know you walks up and questions why you are talking to their child. I have experienced it and luckily the parent was very kind when she found out what we were doing.

Lesson 10

Discipline on a Bus Route

Probably the one thing that is the downfall of many otherwise effective bus workers is the area of discipline. I've seen too many bus captains who have little or no control over what is going on in their bus. I'm not saying that your kids will all be little angels by implementing some of the things I am talking about, but they will help you keep your sanity.

When dealing with kids in any ministry, you need to have a plan on how to deal with kids who act up. Just about every kid will at some point need even a mild rebuke, and some kids just simply do not need to even be messed with. You need to already have decided what infractions incur which punishments.

Please don't get me wrong on this: I am not a harsh disciplinarian when dealing with kids. You have got to strive for balance in dealing with kids. On one hand, you can be their buddy and never get on to them, and on the other you can be tougher (and louder) than a Marine drill sergeant. Either of the extremes is not good.

If you have more than a couple of workers, I recommend designating someone to be the "bad guy". Ordinarily, this does not need to be the bus captain. This person's job is to enforce the rules and deal with those who break them. If the bus captain spots someone from being a distraction, this person takes care of it. Doing this takes a great load off of the bus captain or program leaders and makes for a much smoother ride.

Here is the greatest lesson I ever learned on this subject: The best way to deal with discipline problems is to prevent them. You can do this by encouraging and rewarding good behavior. Also, make it a point to deal with potential problems, such as splitting up a couple of kids who act up when together.

The second most important thing is to not give kids a chance to act up. You accomplish this by having an exciting, lively program with little or no down time. It really depends on your route and your rides as to how far you have to go with this.

To tell you the truth, I hate punishing kids. I have never met an effective bus captain who just loved getting on to unruly children. It breaks their hearts to have to do so.

Here's a brief description of levels of punishment that I have used, starting with the lowest forms:

- **Prevention**

Separate brothers who want to talk or fight. Have kids who usually act up sit up front. Sit a worker next to or near trouble makers. These simple steps probably will do more good than anything.

- **Verbal Warning**

This is not yelling at kids, but it is letting them know they need to stop what they are doing and straighten up.

- **No Reward or Promotion**

First, I will warn them that if they do not straighten up they will not get any candy or have a part in the promotion that is going on. If they continue to act up, I then enforce this.

- **Talk to Parents**

Most kids will act tough if you mention this and say that they don't care. Most of the time it's because people have not followed through with this. If you need to do this, talk to the parents when you drop them off on Sunday. If they are unavailable, do it on Saturday. Just do not wait and do not make empty threats.

When you do talk to parents, be almost apologetic for having to do so. When I do so, I honestly apologize for having to talk to them. I then will tell them what their kids were up to. Then I will tell them that their kids are really good kids, that we love having them, and that it was probably just a bad week for them (I do these even if it means stretching it a little). I don't recommend punishment, I just inform the parents what happened.

- **Suspension**

This is really a hard one to do, but I have had to use it a couple of times. Yes, we want kids to come and there is nothing better for them than church. At the same time it is a privilege to come.

I know many bus captains are too hesitant about taking these kind of steps. One reason is because you do not want to punish kids by keeping them from a good thing in church. Another is that it negatively affects your attendance if someone can't ride. Do not let these bother you, in fact the second one should not even enter your mind because we are trying to impact kids' lives and not fill a bus.

When someone is suspended, the parents need to be informed. Follow the same basic guidelines as I mentioned in the previous section about talking to parents. Beware that there are some parents who may react harshly to this and blame you.

Depending on the infraction, usually a week or two suspension is usually adequate.

- **Kicked Off**

I have never had to do this, but it has to be done sometimes. If kids will not heed correction and are continually a distraction, don't bring them to church. We often focus so much on these bad apples that we neglect the good kids we have.

Often this is not permanent. Just taking this action and sticking by it is sometimes enough to get a kids attention. If you do allow them back in the future, I suggest putting them on a “probation” period to prove they have reformed.

Lesson 11

Going the Second Mile

It is not enough to simply get kids to church on Sunday. It takes a lot of work to develop relationships with the kids and to foster spiritual growth.

This is the area I think we fail most often in the bus ministry. We can pack them in and pass out a lot of candy, but we lose these kids when they get “too cool” for church. We have got to start implementing methods to keep kids into their teens and then on into adulthood.

There are missionaries, preachers, and Christian workers throughout the world that were reached by the bus ministry. We had students in Bible college that were there as a result of a bus ministry. No, not every child will turn out to be a Spurgeon or Moody, but each and every one has that potential.

To have this kind of impact takes a lot of effort. It goes beyond a couple of hours on Saturday and a couple of bus rides on Sunday. It goes beyond candy, promotions, and songs. It takes a heart of a bus worker that is passionate about reaching young people.

Every child and every situation is different. There is no “one size fits all” method of reaching these kids. Some are so starved for attention that they do not need much effort. Some may take literally hours a week of your time.

Let me give you a few suggestions that can help you go the second mile with your kids:

- **Take a Personal Interest in Their Lives and Interests**

This does not mean condoning any type of sin or wrong doing. It does mean attending Little League games every now then.

- **Get Them Involved**

Give them jobs to do in the ministry. Challenge them to do more.

- **Spend Personal Time With Them**

It is OK to take them out for ice cream every now and then. Allow them opportunities to spend time with you.

- **Get Them to Church Services and Special Meetings**

Pick the up in Sunday nights and Wednesday nights. Get them to Youth Rallies.

Appendix A
Sample Song List

Song	Tempo
Walk, Walk the Bible Way	XX
Oh, Soldier	XXX
Knock, Knock, Rattle, Rattle	XXX
B-I-B-L-E	XX
Jesus Loves Me	X
Jesus Loves the Little Children	XX
I'm in the Lords Army	XX
My God is so Big	XX
I will make you Fisher of Men	XX
Who's the King of the Jungle	XX
Little Birdie	XXX
My Lord knows the way thru the Wilderness	X
Read Your Bible, pray everyday	XX
Deep and Wide	XXX
Devil Wants Everybody Grumpy	XX
I'm all Wrapped up	XX
Tony Chesnut	XX
In right, outright, upright, downright	XXX
I've got Jesus on my mind	XXX
God is so Good	X
Peace like a river	XX
Joy, Joy, Joy	XXX