

Independent Baptist Institute  
Bus and Van Ministry  
Dr. Dan Botterbrodt

## *#1 Introduction to the Bus Ministry*

### *Purpose for a Bus or Van Ministry*

1. Wrong reasons for starting a bus ministry
  - 1.1 Pity toward children in poor families
  - 1.2 To increase your church attendance: church growth should be the *result* of Biblical ministry, not the *goal* of ministry!
  - 1.3 Because other churches have a bus ministry
  - 1.4 Because a bus or van was donated to the church
2. Biblical reasons for starting a bus or van ministry
  - 2.1 To glorify the Lord (I Corinthians 10:31)
  - 2.2 To fulfill the Lord's commission (Matthew 28:19-20)
  - 2.3 To win children to the Lord (Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17; II Timothy 3:15-17)
    - 1) In general, it is easier to win a child to Christ than an adult.
    - 2) The bus ministry is an outreach that primarily targets children.

### *Starting a Bus Ministry*

1. Count the cost (Luke 14:25-33, note verse 28). A bus ministry will not "pay" for itself!
  - 1.1 Time and labor (Hebrews 6:10)
  - 1.2 Investment of finances
    - 1) Purchasing a bus
    - 2) Painting the bus (some states do not allow school-bus yellow for church buses)
    - 3) Inspections
    - 4) Maintenance and fuel
    - 5) Physical exams and licensing of drivers
    - 6) Liability insurance
    - 7) Special day promotions
2. Prayerfully seek the Lord's direction for workers and riders.
3. Determine when you will begin the route and start canvassing the area the month before.
4. Follow-up on potential bus riders and organize the route for the first Sunday.
5. A bus route to another community should not replace a church planting effort (Acts 9:31)!

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## #2 *Bus Ministry Personnel*

### *Leadership of the Pastor*

1. Pray for the bus ministry in general and for the workers by name (Acts 6:2-4).
2. The pastor should be involved in the approval and appointment of workers (Acts 6:5-6).
  - 2.1 All ministry workers should be qualified to serve spiritually, emotionally, and legally.
  - 2.2 Qualified individuals should be asked to prayerfully consider serving in the ministry.
  - 2.3 Build ministries around leadership rather than need.
3. Allow bus workers the opportunity to occasionally share testimonies of God's blessings.
4. Express appreciation from the pulpit.
  - 4.1 Recognize years of service.
  - 4.2 Emphasize faithfulness rather than numbers (I Corinthians 3:5-9; I Corinthians 4:2).
5. Equip (train) your workers for effectiveness in their ministry (Ephesians 4:11-16).
6. Plan the church's budget to invest in souls through the bus ministry.
  - 6.1 The bus or van ministry should be considered a missions project (Acts 1:8, *both...and*).
  - 6.2 Some churches partially support the bus ministry from Faith Promise Missions giving.
  - 6.3 Some churches finance the bus ministry from the general fund and designated gifts.

### *Bus Director*

1. The person who fulfills the ministry as bus director varies according to the size of the church.
  - 1.1 In smaller churches, he may be a route bus captain who also oversees the entire ministry.
  - 1.2 In larger churches, the bus director is often an assistant pastor or other staff member.
2. The bus director's primary responsibility is general oversight of the bus ministry.
  - 2.1 Promote a vision for the community
  - 2.2 Plan and lead the bus meeting
  - 2.3 Oversee the weekly operations and bus workers
  - 2.4 Organize the outreach of bus routes
  - 2.5 Research vehicle purchases
  - 2.6 Look for ideas to share with other bus workers
  - 2.7 Preach a devotional message in the bus meeting to exhort
  - 2.8 Recruit and train workers approved and appointed by the pastor.

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*Bus Captains and Workers*

1. Pray fervently and specifically for your bus route.
  - 1.1 Pray for each child on your route by name (divide the list of riders and prospects into six sections).
  - 1.2 Spend some time fasting and praying for effective ministry to people.
  - 1.3 Pray for specific needs represented by individuals on your route.
    - 1) Wisdom in dealing with families
    - 2) Salvation of those who need to repent and believe
2. Organize and prepare for your route on Sunday.
  - 2.1 Plan your route so that you normally arrive on time for Sunday school.
  - 2.2 Workers may need to help some children get ready (with parental approval).
  - 2.3 Prepare a program for the ride to and from the church property.
    - 1) Sing both fun and serious songs.
    - 2) Many bus workers provide snacks for the riders.
    - 3) Workers can share the responsibility of teaching a brief message (object lessons, Bible stories).
    - 4) On the return trip, play games that will not cause a safety or control problem on the bus (prize ideas: dollar bills, small candy bars, items from Oriental Trading).
    - 5) Learn and review a memory verse that relates to the Sunday school lesson (Psalm 119:9-11).
    - 6) The website [www.churchbusnews.com](http://www.churchbusnews.com) is a good source for game ideas, songs, promotions, and object lessons to use in your bus ministry.
3. Organize and maintain an informational book for the route that includes personal information about each rider: name, address, age, date of birth, grade in school, parents/guardians, and phone number. Note: this book should not be left unsecured in the bus during the week.
4. Ensure that your bus is equipped with the necessary supplies.
  - 4.1 Cleaning supplies
  - 4.2 Markers for writing the bus number on each rider's hand
  - 4.3 First aid kit

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*Bus Drivers*

1. Establish a standard procedure for driver approval.
  - 1.1 Perform a background check.
  - 1.2 Obtain a Motor Vehicle Report on the potential driver.
  - 1.3 Obtain a Commercial Driver's License (Class B) at the local DMV office.
    - 1) General knowledge
    - 2) Passenger safety
    - 3) Air brakes
  - 1.4 Contact the church's insurance company for approval.
2. Once approval and a CDL learning permit have been obtained, the new driver should train with a designated driver trainer.
  - 2.1 Drive in the church's lot to learn basic maneuvering skills (cones, backing, etc.).
  - 2.2 Ride with the driver trainer on a bus route at least once.
  - 2.3 Drive an empty bus in a variety of traffic situations.
  - 2.4 Ride on a bus route for several weeks.
3. Maintain a permanent file for each driver. The file should include the following items:
  - 3.1 A copy of the CDL
  - 3.2 Any signed forms and the Motor Vehicle Report
  - 3.3 Results of the pre-employment drug test required by federal law
  - 3.4 Any accident and incident reports involving the driver
4. Drivers and mechanics should perform weekly vehicle maintenance checks.
5. Buses should be taken for a yearly inspection by the Department of Transportation.
6. If a driver is in an at-fault accident, the following procedure could be followed depending on the seriousness of the accident (adapted from Ray Young, *The Miracle of the Bus Ministry*, p. 283).
  - 6.1 Minor accident: retrain for one hour with the driving trainer
  - 6.2 Suspension for six months and retraining
  - 6.3 Suspension for one year and a probationary period
  - 6.4 Unsafe driving should result in an immediate suspension or dismissal, depending on the seriousness of the offense.

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### *#3 The Bus Meeting*

#### *Why Have Bus Meetings*

1. For encouragement and exhortation (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10)
2. Accountability
3. To share ideas
4. For unity of the ministry
5. To train workers
6. To receive information about coming special days or necessary procedures

#### *Effective Meetings*

1. A meeting does not have to be long for it to be effective (15-20 minutes).
2. The time for the meetings varies according to the church's schedule (a smaller church should only need a meeting once each month)
  - 2.1 Saturday morning meetings encourage bus workers to get out for visits.
  - 2.2 Before or after the mid-week church service
  - 2.3 Before or after the Sunday evening service
3. The weekly (or monthly) bus meeting should include the following.
  - 3.1 Singing of bus songs so that new workers learn them for their routes
  - 3.2 Prayer for special needs of bus riders
  - 3.3 Announcements that relate to all bus routes
  - 3.4 Brief testimonies
  - 3.5 A short devotional message for exhortation, not rebuke
4. Occasional skits add fun to special bus meetings (like an annual bus banquet).
5. A memo sheet can be distributed to each worker.
  - 5.1 Memory verses for the week or month
  - 5.2 Suggestions for workers and drivers
  - 5.3 Safety reminders
  - 5.4 Upcoming special Sundays
  - 5.5 Ideas for the program on the bus
6. Distribute any literature needed on the buses (tracts, fliers, forms).

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## *#4 Route Visitation*

### *Visiting a Bus Route*

1. Both bus workers and Sunday school teachers should visit the children.
2. It is best to have a normal time each week for route visitation.
  - 2.1 The best time is near the end of the week.
  - 2.2 Children will expect you each week when you are consistent.
3. Organize your regular visits.
  - 3.1 Regular visits should include those who rarely or have never been to the church.
  - 3.2 Keep the regular visits brief.
  - 3.3 Express interest in the children and their family.
  - 3.4 Give an approximate time the bus or van will be at their home on Sunday.
  - 3.5 Spend a moment praying for the needs of the family.
  - 3.6 Create a route list that includes information about each rider.
  - 3.7 Design a flier to leave on the door.
4. Invite friends and family members to Sunday school.
5. Look for an open door to minister to a hurting family and to share the gospel.
6. Systematically visit a portion of your route each week.
  - 6.1 Use a city map to highlight streets after people have been contacted.
  - 6.2 Record accurate information on a card or church prospect form.
  - 6.3 Ray Young recommends using codes to briefly record the results of visiting a city block.
    - 1) Write the street name and block across the top of the card.
    - 2) List the house numbers on each side of the card.
    - 3) He suggests the following codes:
      - NH - not home
      - WC - will come
      - NI - not interested
      - CB - come back (include best time)
      - NW - next week
    - 4) Keep the cards for later follow-up of good prospects.

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## *#5 Special Days*

### *How to Have a Special Day*

1. Pray for the Holy Spirit to work in hearts as bus workers prepare for the special Sunday.
2. Use caution in setting attendance goals.
  - 2.1 You may limit what God wants to do by setting a goal too low.
  - 2.2 You can discourage your workers by repeatedly not reaching a goal.
  - 2.3 Many preachers focus on numbers to have the praise of men (see Matthew 6).
  - 2.4 Set a goal for the number of homes contacted rather than the number of riders.
  - 2.5 Rewards from the Lord are received for laboring in the field, not for how many respond (I Corinthians 3:1-10).
3. Beware of having too many special Sundays.
  - 3.1 The specialness of the day is lost if you schedule too many "big days."
  - 3.2 Plan special days for the bus and van ministry related to special church events.
4. Plan a Saturday outing once every four to six months.
  - 4.1 Run the van and bus routes on Saturday instead of Sunday (suggestion: the Saturday before Resurrection Sunday and Christmas).
  - 4.2 Plan a carnival at the church or an outing to another location.
  - 4.3 The pastor of the church should preach a message at the beginning of the outing.
  - 4.4 Serve a lunch at the outing.
  - 4.5 By running the bus routes on Saturday, bus workers have an opportunity to enjoy a Sunday morning service with their families.

### *Ideas for Special Sundays*

1. Super Sunday: divide into two teams on Super Bowl Sunday; prizes can include a new football to one of the boys
2. Goldfish Sunday: every child receives a gold fish; goldfish crackers; gummy worms or fish
3. Banana Split Sunday
4. Ice Cream Sunday
5. Friend Sunday: a nice gift given to everyone who brings a friend
6. Balloon Sunday: release helium balloons with a gospel tract attached; a prize can be given to the

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one who had a balloon fly the farthest

7. Parent Sunday on Mother's or Father's Day: get confirmation of plans to attend; recognize parents of bus riders; share a video presentation of the bus ministry; take portraits of families attending; provide a meal for the parents following the morning service; plan a separate activity for the bus riders (picnic, games)
8. Back to School Sunday: each rider receives a bag of school supplies included on the local school supply lists
9. Pizza Sunday
10. Kick-off Sunday: the first Sunday of a fall campaign using a football theme
11. Election Sunday: this works well for a fall outreach campaign. Each bus captain campaigns for "votes" (riders on the bus). A humorous "debate" skit can be planned for the final Sunday between the candidates.
12. Turkey Sunday: offer a frozen turkey to every family the Sunday before Thanksgiving
13. Christmas Sunday: each rider receives a gift bag that includes a nice New Testament; a devotional can be given related to the meaning of the candy cane (representing the blood of Christ)

*Bus Ministry Resources*

1. *The Church Bus News* magazines
2. *The Miracle of the Bus Ministry* by Ray Young
3. *The Soul Winning Bus Ministry* by Dave Smith  
([www.biblebelievers.com/BusMinistryManual.pdf](http://www.biblebelievers.com/BusMinistryManual.pdf))
4. The website [www.churchbusnews.com](http://www.churchbusnews.com)

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## *#6 Protecting Your Bus Ministry*

### *Benevolence Requests*

1. A van or bus ministry often increases benevolence requests.
2. A church may need to establish a policy and procedure to protect the church.
  - 2.1 Limit benevolence requests to church members and families of regular riders.
  - 2.2 Set a limit on the number of times assistance is provided each year.
  - 2.3 Set a dollar limit for each time assistance is given.
  - 2.4 Only necessary items can be purchased (no cookies, ice cream, chips, sodas, etc.).
3. Refer the family to a community service if the church is unable to assist.
4. Some churches receive an "others offering" in the their midweek service to provide assistance.

### *Potential Lawsuits*

1. Keep accurate attendance records on file.
2. Keep incident and accident reports filed indefinitely.
3. Perform background checks on all workers. The Christian Law Association has several helpful resources.

### *Proper Discipline*

1. There are various reasons children misbehave.
  - 1.1 Boredom
  - 1.2 Desire for attention
  - 1.3 Turmoil in their family situation
  - 1.4 They have a sin nature!
2. Attempt to control misbehavior.
  - 2.1 Pray for the child.
  - 2.2 Continue expressing genuine love and interest in the child.
  - 2.3 Establish clear rules and enforce them consistently and impartially.
  - 2.4 Plan a program for the bus and expect all riders to be involved.
  - 2.5 Change seating arrangements to separate disruptive riders.
  - 2.6 Correct misbehavior privately when possible.
  - 2.7 Give a suspension for repeat violations.

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3. Use extreme caution when dealing with a child causing problems on a bus.
  - 3.1 Never spank the child.
  - 3.2 Never use physical force on a misbehaving child unless there is potential of injury to another person.
  - 3.3 Repeat offenders who cause severe disruptions on the bus should not be allowed to ride the bus until the behavior is changed.
  - 3.4 Parents should be contacted when a discipline problem occurs.

*Safety Procedures*

1. A parental permission form should be signed before each child is allowed to ride the first time.
2. Special attention should be given to seating arrangements.
  - 2.1 Fill the seats on a bus from the front to the back.
  - 2.2 Boys and girls should not be allowed to sit together on the bus.
3. Park the vehicle in front of the house and walk young children to the bus.
4. If the church has more than one route, the route number can be written on the hand of riders.
5. No wild activities or uncontrolled behavior should be permitted on the bus. An injury could mean a lawsuit!
6. Children should never be left on a bus unattended.
7. No one should stand on the steps or in the aisle while the bus is moving.
8. Windows should only be partially lowered to ensure that children do not put their head and arms out the window.
9. Children should be walked to their appropriate classrooms and back to the bus after church.
10. Take attendance before leaving the church to ensure all riders are present.
11. Children should be returned to the same address unless you have *written* parental approval.
12. Keep attendance records on file. Attendance may need to be verified in the event of a lawsuit.
13. Rules on the bus should be reviewed often and enforced. Post them at the front of the bus.
14. Always have someone standing outside to guide the driver when backing up the bus.
15. Never exceed the rated passenger limit for the vehicle.
16. Bus workers should be careful to not be alone with bus children to avoid possibilities of false accusations.

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## *#7 Dealing With Children for Salvation*

### *Salvation of Children*

1. Desire to have true salvations, not just professions of faith.
  - 1.1 Saying a prayer does not save anyone (Matthew 7:21-23; Luke 18:9-14; Acts 10).
  - 1.2 You can give a child a false assurance of going to heaven when they do not understand the gospel.
  - 1.3 Many are more concerned about reporting numbers than assuring that true conversion takes place (Acts 20:20-21).
2. When a child responds to an invitation (in Sunday school, children's church, bus preaching), confirm that he understands first.
  - 2.1 Ask the child, "Why have you come?"
  - 2.2 If the response indicates that he does not understand, ask him to return to his seat.
  - 2.3 Give the Holy Ghost time to prepare his heart with conviction (John 16:7-11).
3. Use a thorough presentation of the gospel (Acts 28:23-24).
  - 3.1 Emphasize our lost condition before a holy God.
    - 1) Everyone knows that they have done things wrong (Romans 2:14-16).
    - 2) Not everyone acknowledges that they have violated God's law.
    - 3) Most think they can be good enough to earn a way into heaven.
  - 3.2 Use more than a "1, 2, 3, pray after me" presentation.
    - 1) Most need more than a few Romans Road verses.
    - 2) If a person's heart is truly prepared by the Holy Ghost, you will not need to lead them in a "sinner's prayer."
  - 3.3 Include all elements of the gospel (I Corinthians 15:1-4). Many emphasize the sacrifice of Christ to the neglect of the resurrection.
  - 3.4 Use Scripture in your presentation of the gospel (Romans 10:17).

### *Baptisms of Bus Children*

1. Wait to mention baptism until you confirm that the child understands salvation.
2. Always have a parent sign a baptism permission form before baptizing a bus child.
3. Explain baptism thoroughly to ensure that the child understands the purpose of baptism.

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*Ways to Reach Parents*

1. Pray for families by name.
2. Consistently contact parents (visits, phone calls, notes).
3. Use special days and giveaways to encourage parents to visit the church with their child.
4. Minister to them during a time of need (illness, death, etc.).
5. When a bus child is saved, explain to the parents what their child did when seeking permission for baptism. This gives an opportunity to present the gospel to the parents.