

**J Sheatsley**

**To My Sunday School  
Teachers**



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"The history of the Church confirms and illustrates the teachings of the Bible, that yielding little by little leads to yielding more and more, until all is in danger; and the tempter is never satisfied until all is lost. – Matthias Loy, *The Story of My Life*

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# To My Sunday School Teachers

**A SERIES OF SHORT PAPERS IN POPULAR FORM  
ON TEACHING IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL**

BY

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**TOGETHER WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTE BY**

**PROF. GEO. H. SCHODDE, Ph. D.**

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## PREFACE.

**M**OST of the following papers were originally prepared and read by the writer before his Sunday-school teachers at the weekly teachers' meeting. The simple work was not without good results as expressions from the teachers seemed to assure. It was thought afterwards that these same articles might accomplish some good in a wider circle. Accordingly in the after summer and autumn of 1901 they were rewritten for the *Standard*, a number of entirely new subjects being treated to round out more fully the series. As the articles appeared in this synodical periodical they seemed to be favorably received and the hope was expressed that they might be put in a more permanent shape. It was accordingly resolved by the Synod's Publication Board that they be issued in booklet form.

The papers aim to be face-to-face talks with Sunday-school teachers about some of the things they need to know and think about, if they wish to be faithful in their work. No claim is made here to a thorough nor a scientific treatment of the subject. They claim only to be popular talks, nothing more.

It is hardly necessary to mention the authorities that were consulted. One work however that proved more than ordinarily helpful and suggestive should be mentioned, viz., Dr. H. Clay Trumbull's "*Teaching and Teachers*," a valuable work on the subject. Acknowledgment is hereby made that some of the matter in a number of chapters as also the

form to some extent was suggested by the above book. Direct quotations are of course credited where they appear.

That this humble effort, though pleasant work, may, under the blessing of God, prove to be a means of betterment to our Sunday-schools is the hope of the author.

Delaware, Ohio, early summer of 1902.

## INTRODUCTION.

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**T**HIS little book is an excellent help to thoughtful Sunday-school teachers. It has grown out of the practical needs of the Sunday-school and will be appreciated by those whose eyes and hearts are open to the problems and perplexities that surround the Sunday-school teacher. Its strength lies in the correct pædagogical principles that are developed in the different chapters and in the suggestiveness of the methods and manners in which the topics are discussed. The book will aid in helping the teacher to do some profitable thinking; and, in view of the fact that in the abundance of modern Sunday-school teachers' literature published but a small proportion is really helpful, fills an actual want. Our Sunday-school teachers will do themselves the greatest favor by studying carefully the contents of this book.

GEORGE H. SCHODDE.





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## I. THE GRAVITY OF YOUR WORK.



**F**IRST of all, I want to speak to you about the serious nature of your work. If you are not, or cannot be, impressed with the gravity of your work, then, from the very beginning, you are not qualified to teach in the Sunday-school. You come here not to wield needles, brooms, weights, measures, account books, and the like, but to wield the word of life and to deal with immortal souls. If it is possible for one to go about these things with lightness, then is it also possible for one to stand, in a frivolous mood, at the portals of death, or before the judgment seat of God. In either case a soul is in the balance.

There are three things which make teaching in the Sunday-school a grave work. First, there is this fact that you are dealing directly with immortal souls. Take a quiet hour and consider profoundly what that means. Well asks one, "When shall we awake to the sublime greatness, the perils, the accountableness, and the glorious destinies of the immortal soul?" The occupant is greater than the house, for the house was made for the occupant and not the occupant for the house. No man, therefore, will sell his life to save his house. This world is great, but it is only man's house. Hence Jesus groups all the wealth and glory of this world together, and asks what one would profit

by taking them in exchange for his soul. Or, if the mere statement of our Savior is not sufficient to impress us with the soul's worth, then look at His work. Deeds speak louder than words. Consider, then, that God Himself and the only perfect Man, gave His life to deliver our souls from ruin. It speaks volumes for the worth of souls that He who alone fully understands their value paid so great a price that we might live. We cannot correctly estimate the value of a soul; we can estimate the value of a farm, or of some city real estate, or of an education or profession, for these things can be figured in dollars and cents, but the full value of a soul eludes our comprehension. We therefore defer in our judgment to Jesus; for He knows the spiritual world better than we know the natural, and to Him a child outweighs worlds upon worlds.

But if a soul's worth is so great you must see that its loss is correspondingly great. Jesus said of the house built upon the sand, against which the winds and the rains and the floods beat, that it fell and great was the fall of it. The ruins are great because the house was great. You cannot make a big destruction of a little thing, but neither can you make a little destruction of a big thing. If the destruction is complete, it is bound to be a great destruction. So you have great things in your classes; if there will be destruction at all, it will be a great destruction. That

fact should impress you. It is an awful thing to contemplate the loss of an immortal soul. You should be impressed, therefore, not only with the fact that the soul is great, but especially also with the fact that this great soul may be lost.

If you were standing at the mouth of some great abyss and could be induced to look down over its edge, you would draw back quickly with a shudder. Why? Chiefly because of the possibility of toppling over and down. Can you now lightly sit down before your class and without the least shudder think of the possibility that some of those souls may sink into the great abyss of eternal despair? This is not sentiment. We have no use for mere sentiment in the Sunday-school. It is simply an attempt to get at the real gravity of the situation. The fact is that you have immortal souls before you, that each one of those souls weighs more in God's balance than all the world, that one or more or possibly all of those souls may be lost, and that you are dealing with them for weal or woe.

The second thing which adds to the gravity of your work is the fact that you are making use of the Word of life. You know that it is not the object of the Sunday-school to teach human wisdom, but divine. The only means by which this can be done is the Word of God. There is therefore no choice left. If you will teach at all, you must teach God's Word. The teaching of anything else, however useful it might

otherwise be, is out of place in the Sunday-school; for here you have to do with souls to be saved and not with boys and girls to be fitted for seamstresses, clerks or shop hands. Now, you should be impressed with the fact that the instrument with which you work is *God's Word*. As He is great so is His Word great, for it is a revelation of His power, glory and majesty. The grave command, Take not my name in vain, applies to the entire Word of God. Use that Word not in vain, use it not carelessly nor thoughtlessly; for it is a revelation of God's name. If you were working with an instrument made of gold and diamonds, you would use it more carefully than if it were steel. Thus the teacher, if for no other reason than that he is making use of God's Word, should go about his work with becoming gravity and reverence.

But there is more here. This Word of God is the Word of life. We are born in sin and trespasses and in consequence by nature spiritually dead. This Word gives us life, for it is life itself. If your friend were sick unto death and there were but one remedy that could help him, how anxiously you would inquire for that remedy, how carefully you would guard it against adulterations, and how closely you would follow the prescription in administering it. You have in your class a line of patients. They are living because they have been baptized and received into God's covenant of grace. But they are sick and, it may

be, very sick. That immortal soul of great worth is in danger of being lost; the house is in danger of falling; what is of greater value than all the world, is in danger of being cast away as unprofitable. This is the situation before you and nothing can save and preserve and completely deliver but God's Word.

But there is even more here. The Word of life must be properly used or else it may prove to be the word of death. It is not enough to know that a certain remedy may recover your sick friend, you must also know how to administer the remedy. The wrong use might prove fatal. God's Word by its very nature is the Word of life, yet in the using it may be perverted and result in death. Paul speaks of it both as a savor of life unto life and savor of death unto death. Jesus says of His Word that it is spirit and life, yet He says of it with reference to His enemies that it will judge them at the last day. You may urge that the effect of the Word will depend upon the conduct of your pupils, for they must take heed how they hear. Such *may* be the case, but, on the other hand, it may depend upon your manner of teaching. Then, too, the conduct of your pupils may depend upon your conduct, especially if it is improper; for boys and girls are naturally great imitators of that which is wrong. But even if you should be entirely exempt from guilt, both in teaching and in conduct, does not the fact itself that this or that child *may*

hear the Word to its own hurt call for most serious thoughts and a grave demeanor on the part of the teacher? Without, then, considering the matter of responsibility just here yet, you should solemnly feel the fact that you are handling that which means life or death to the class before you. Again, then, remember that you are not engaged with needles, weights, and measures, nor with grammar, history, or art, but with the Word of God and with immortal souls.

The third thing which adds to the gravity of the work is your responsibility in the matter. And the question just how you have come to stand before the class as a teacher, by whose authority, in what manner, or to whom, if any one, you are responsible, is not of much consequence here. The fact is that you stand there as teacher and that involves responsibility. The relation of teacher to taught always involves responsibility, whether one has been expressly called to that position or not. If you meet a boy or girl upon the street or in the shop and that person looks up to you as to a superior and is willing to learn from you, whether good or bad, you are, for the time being, that child's teacher, whether you want to be or not, or whether you have been chosen to be or not. There are some obligations which we do not assume of ourselves, neither can we get rid of them of ourselves. Such an obligation is that of teacher to every one with whom we come in contact and who may, unconsciously



perhaps, be influenced by us. Thus you stand before your class; how you came to stand there need not concern us here. The fact is that you have consented to stand there as teacher and that lays upon you the teacher's responsibility.

Now consider that you are dealing with immortal souls which at your hands ought to be saved, or at least helped along on the way of salvation, but which may be lost, or at least encouraged to choose the way of destruction; consider further that you are applying to them the Word of life, which if rightly applied will save them, but if wrongly applied may occasion eternal loss; consider these things and how can you help feeling that a great responsibility rests upon you? Once more, then, it is not success with needles, weights, measures, and the like, for which you are responsible, but the welfare of immortal souls. In view of these things you should feel the gravity of your work. It's holy ground on which you stand.

## II. THORNS, OR UNPLEASANT THINGS IN TEACHING.



**I**N the preceding paper the gravity or weightiness of the teacher's work was pointed out. The facts there considered naturally have the tendency to frighten teachers from their posts. It is never in itself desirable to assume serious obligations. No one will assume a debt of a thousand dollars unless there is a good cause for it. Even then the debt itself is not desirable.

This evening we shall look expressly at those things which render the work of teaching in the Sunday-school undesirable. And here, to guard against utter reluctance, we should remember that the good and evil are mixed in this world. We cannot well get the rose without some thorns; no one can accomplish much good without exacting labor and self-sacrifice. What the tree gives us in fruit it takes from its own life supply. Whatever blessings for yourselves and others may be the fruit of your work as teachers, you must needs pluck them from among some thorns. It is well to know this beforehand, that you may not pierce your hands unnecessarily.

First of all, it is not desirable in itself to assume any responsibilities for others bearing on the salvation of their souls. It is such an awful thing to stand surety before the throne of God for the souls of others

that, if it were possible, we would much prefer to free ourselves from all such responsibility. Each one feels that he has enough to do to stand surety for himself. To assume, therefore, if only in part, the training of young hearts in the most plastic stage of their existence and in some measure hold ourselves accountable for their eternal weal or woe is not a desirable thought. For the serious mind it is a considerable thorn in the flesh. It is proper, therefore, to respect the feeling of those who for such reasons hesitate to accept the office of teaching.

But when you refuse to walk in this path you may turn into another that is even more thorny. Notwithstanding the protest of Cain we are, all of us, our brothers' keepers. If we should seek to escape that obligation, then, like Cain of old, we might become vagabonds upon earth bearing about upon us the mark of God's disapprobation. We are teachers and keepers by the very ordinance of God, before ever we are made teachers in the Sunday-school. Do not forget this. It will help you to understand properly your position. If all were fully aware of this obligation and would meet it, especially parents at home, then teachers *in* the Sunday-school would not need to spend so much time in doing what teachers *out* of the Sunday-school failed to effect. We of course keep in view that there is a difference between teaching in the Sunday-school

and that of the shop or market, and yet the difference is rather in degree than in kind.

When St. James says, "Be not many masters," that is, teachers, "knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation," he warns earnestly against any one pushing himself forward as teacher when he has no special call. It is wholesome advice. Let no one assume duties and obligations to which he has not been called. At any rate, anxiety to teach is not the best recommendation. When one has seriously weighed the gravity of the work, anxiety leans the other way. But neither, on the other hand, do the words of St. James justify one in refusing when he has been rightly appointed to the office of teaching. If God has given you talents which you can use in the instruction of others and the proper persons have seen fit to appoint you to such a position, then the mere fact that you do not want to assume the responsibility is no just ground for declining to do the work. The work has its responsibilities, but so has every other work. Such is God's order, and we cannot reverse it. If a person wishes to go for nothing in this world and the next, the way is, of course, open. The question, therefore, is not, Are there responsibilities to assume, but, Does God want me to do the work and assume the responsibility? If this is clear, then your duty is plain; you must assume the responsibility. It is a thorn that clings to the rose.

Another feature of teaching in the Sunday-school which requires considerable effort to overcome is the extra work demanded. First, there is the preparation for the hour of teaching; and a thorough preparation cannot be effected in a few minutes, simply by reading the lesson over a few times. Such a teacher is of course no *teacher*, and if we have any such in this Sunday-school, we should consider it a great favor if they would promptly resign. What was said in the former paper about the gravity of the work should move every one to make the most careful preparation. Patient and extended study is, therefore, necessary. The teachers' meeting must be attended, and this calls for one evening of the week. One must needs get up earlier Sunday morning and hasten work in order to be with the class on time. The hour of teaching itself is exacting; it is work, not play. Besides, there are many other duties which devolve upon the teacher, such as calling upon the pupils at their homes, going after absentees, looking up new scholars, visiting the sick. Taken together it is a considerable task that is laid upon the teacher in addition to his other duties as a Christian member of the Church and it requires no little grace to perform the work faithfully. We are not surprised to find some refusing to teach because they are not ready for this sacrifice. On the other hand, it is one of the chief marks of the good teacher when one is willing to assume this additional work for

the sake of Christ. To him, furthermore, it is not a burden, but a joyful service; like Jesus' yoke, it is easy and the burden is light. Like the holy women in the time of Christ, he is willing to minister of his substance, time, and strength. But teachers are still also flesh and blood. There is still much weakness here, and extra work for others and the good of the Church are apt to become a burden. Somebody else's market basket is apt to become much heavier than our own. No little effort is necessary to overcome this weakness and to do the work cheerfully.

There is another feature of the teacher's position that calls loudly for a crucifixion of the flesh. It is the time required for the work. One often feels strongly inclined to use this for other purposes. The hour and a half of Sunday-school is cut out of Sunday morning, a period which one could devote nicely to reading, but which is often spent in bed or devoted to a snail-like movement in getting ready for Church. What seems to be the least objectionable feature of the work is for many the most difficult to overcome. It is an actual thorn in the flesh, so sharp and painful that it disables many a teacher from getting to Sunday-school on time. Oh, that Sunday morning were two hours longer just for the sake of these dear laborers in the Lord's vineyard.

But still more time is required for the work. One evening of the week must be given to the teachers'

meeting. There are perhaps a dozen other things for which one would like to use that evening and often it is just the evening which one feels it almost impossible to give up. Usually the decision must be made between business or pleasure, on the one hand, and the teachers' meeting on the other. It should not be hard to decide, but for some it seems to be a knotty question. Others decide the question promptly, but some of them unfortunately against the teachers' meeting. As to amusements, the teacher is by no means debarred from these, yet a particular entertainment must be of far more than ordinary value, if it can be permitted to crowd out the preparation for Sunday's work. It is perhaps a greater temptation to spend the evening at home reading, but the conscientious teacher must decide even against this. And as to one's business exactions, it is certainly fair to raise the question whether one could not so arrange his business as to leave the greater part of one evening out of six free for Sunday-school work. At all events, he who has no time for the teacher's work during the week will, we fear, have little capacity for it Sunday. But, aside from the teachers' meeting, private study requiring time is also necessary for a thorough preparation of the lesson. Then, too, scholars must be visited, absentees looked up and the like work. Taken together we have again not an inconsiderable demand

made upon the teacher, and it requires no little divine grace to comply with it cheerfully.

We need to notice still another unpleasant feature often connected with teaching. The class is not always composed of faces from which shines a sweet and agreeable disposition. Sometimes you have pupils who are not only mischievous, but really naughty or even wicked. It is far from pleasant to try to instruct such persons. It is a task from which we naturally recoil and the more serious the teacher the more strongly, as a rule, is he affected. One is apt to become heart-sick of the work. Archdeacon Farrar says, "The strain of keeping their attention, of bearing with their occasional naughtiness, and wilfulness, and of interesting them in sacred lessons, is — for all but true teachers — very considerable. It is not wonderful that ease, and the dear delights of our own fireside on the Day of Rest, plead trumpet-tongued with so many, and persuade them that they personally have no responsibility for the future, no duty to posterity, no debt of service to the Church of God and the benefit of their fellowmen." A bright, well-behaved class it is a pleasure to teach, but the dull, the naughty and the inattentive are a thorn in the flesh.

In conclusion, we thus find a number of things in the teacher's work which are not desirable, and if we should consult only our own convenience and pleasure, we would all much prefer to let others do the



teaching. But here, as in all higher duties, we must be governed by other motives than personal ease and convenience. If we are not willing to sacrifice ease, pleasure and convenience, at least in a measure, then we lack one of the essential qualifications for effective work in the Church; yes, more, we cannot be disciples of Christ, for here there is a cross to bear and it must be borne after Jesus.

### III. THE PENNY OR THE REWARD.



**I**N the preceding papers not much was said to encourage any one to accept the position of teaching in the Sunday-school. On the other hand, not a little was said to discourage persons from assuming the task. But the amateur swimmer needs to know first of all that water will drown. So here the responsibilities and other undesirable features of teaching were spoken of first, purposely. If you are not willing to assume these responsibilities and to face these difficulties, then you lack the very first qualification of the teacher. Nor is it of any use to go farther in the matter; if one will not face these conditions, then he must not undertake the work. Enough was said to show that the teacher must be prepared to take, in a measure at least, the souls of the children into his own hands; he must hold himself accountable, to a certain extent, for their proper spiritual training. Enough was said to show that the teacher must be prepared for labor and self-sacrifice. Teaching anywhere, and so too in the Sunday-school, is not pastime nor amusement, but work.

We can now pass on to a subject which is more inviting. Evils that come from God are always for the righteous mixed with good; work implies pay. Just because teaching is work you may expect some

valuable returns. Paul says that if any will not work neither shall he eat. The proposition is true turned around; if any do work, he shall eat. "The laborer is worthy of his hire." The lord of the vineyard agreed with the laborers for a penny a day. That penny you as teacher shall have, if you faithfully do your work. You are laboring in the Lord's vineyard and at eventide you shall not miss your reward.

But here the question suggests itself at once whether the matter of pay as a motive should at all enter into our calculations. Should not the fact that God wants us to do the work and that He has in some way called us to the post be motive enough for putting our hand to the plow? Indeed, is that not the only motive that we can legitimately consider? To the first question we answer, "Yes"; it should be enough for the teacher to know that God has given him that work to do. To the second question, however, we say, "No." Although we do God's work because He wants us to, yet it is perfectly proper to cheer ourselves in that work with the thought that we shall not lose our reward. When the householder hired laborers in his vineyard, he told them at the beginning that he would give them what was right. When God tells us to believe upon Christ, He at the same time tells us that by so doing we shall be saved. In expectation of future blessings God cheers us in our present labors and trials.

What now is the teacher's recompense in the Sunday-school? First of all, it should be a source of comfort and real rejoicing to know that he has done God's will in the matter. The way our souls are constituted, God's approbation upon our work is really the highest reward. The demand that we do the Lord's will is upon us at every turn of our life. When we do that will we have the approval of conscience, but when we omit doing it, then conscience is pained. Nor is there any reason why sins of omission should be considered any less guilty than sins of commission. No one can sanctify the Lord's day by simply putting aside all manner of work and spending the day in idle rest. Neither can you in general serve God and satisfy conscience by doing nothing, whether good or evil. We are in the Lord's vineyard and we are there to work; the idlers are supposed to be outside sitting about the market place.

If you, then, in the proper way, have been given a class in the Sunday-school, that is a work which the Lord wants you to do. To refuse, without sufficient grounds, is disobedience to the Lord Himself, and in the case of the true conscience this cannot be done without pain; but to do the work will result in satisfaction and peace of mind. There is an ennobling and strengthening moral force in the consciousness of having done God's will that the Christian workman should never overlook. Simply as such a factor,

peace of mind is worth more than the world's store of gold and silver.

I am well aware that there are some who, since the Sunday-school is not a divine but a human arrangement, do not look upon teachers as in any proper sense called of the Lord to their work. The inference would seem to be that, although the Lord wants the little ones taught, yet He does not want our Sunday-school teachers as such to do it. If such were really the case, then of course we should disband as Sunday-schools, and, as Israel said, Every one to his tent, O Israel. We concede that the Sunday-school is not the best arrangement for teaching the young the things of God and in so far it is not in accordance with God's will; but, on the other hand, God blesses our work, at least in a measure, and in so far owns it, even if our methods are not always the most perfect. It is clear, too, that a Sunday-school teacher has not been called in the same way as the preacher, yet he is also doing the Lord's work.

There is a recompense, furthermore, in the consciousness of having done good. We are all to do good one to another, but the teacher in the Sunday-school has a special work of this character. Marcus Aurelius said that "we were born for co-operation." The apostle goes farther and declares that this is the purpose not only of our living, but also of our dying: "None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to

himself." He also gives the proper motive for doing this, viz.: "By *love* serve one another." Selfishness, where each individual is interested only in self, has no place in God's world as he intended it. The oyster in its own shell is not the model of our life. To become converted and children of God implies that we break our individual shells and join those who seek to bear one another's burdens. And if we have been born and born again for helping one another, then there must be happiness in doing good. For, as one has truthfully said, "there is and always must be, a happiness in the fulfillment of our true function." "By love serve one another," says the same writer, "is one of the most comprehensive and one of the most blessed rules in life."

You as teachers have been given just such work to do. You have before you children and young persons who need, most of all, instruction in the Word of Life. They need other things, but this is their chief need. You then have opportunity to do them the greatest possible good. They need also your advice and the influence of your character to keep them and bend them more and more to the way that is safe and that leads to life. You can show your love to them and your interest in them and so win them more fully to the truth, or even allure some from the way of destruction. The consciousness of having rendered such

service should be considered a great recompense of reward.

But there are also other pennies for the teacher. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself." Of nothing is this truer, perhaps, than of teaching God's Word to others. You have in your classes tender plants planted by our Heavenly Father through baptism. They need to be watered and you are doing at least a part of this watering. In this work the water is being poured about your own roots, the light which shines into their hearts shines into your own likewise.

I need not explain how this is. You have certainly learned that you have not mastered a lesson until you are able to teach others the same lesson in an intelligent manner. But you will say, I could still prepare the lesson, even if I were not a teacher. You could, but would you? The conscientious teacher will make such a thorough study of the lesson as we would expect from very few pupils. But in addition, the teaching of the lesson will often impart breadth of understanding and a supply of spiritual food that cannot be acquired in the mere preparation. Thus while you are serving others, you are enriching yourself and the Scripture is fulfilled that "the liberal soul shall be made fat." Like a fertile field, you grow fat upon that which you produce. The more thoroughly you prepare yourself for the hour of teaching

the more will your own mind be enriched with grace and truth.

But there is a recompense here of another kind. Next to a knowledge of God and the way of life, a knowledge of human nature is perhaps the most useful. We not only learn to know ourselves better by learning to know others, but the value of our service to others generally depends largely upon our knowledge of them. Whether we are dealing with ourselves or with others, it is human nature that we are dealing with and we often fail in our purpose and plans because our knowledge of human nature is not sufficient. Paul says, "By love serve one another," but that does not mean that love is the only thing needed for such service. Love often hides a multitude of sins, yet love alone will not make a Sunday-school teacher nor a nurse in a sick room. The motive in such a case is good, but more is required than mere motive.

Now in the Sunday-school room you receive a lesson in comparative human nature every Sunday. Each child has his own peculiar temper and disposition, bent of mind and moral bias, and each day you perhaps discover something new in this one or that. These are all valuable lessons and should be carefully learned. They will fit you for teaching your own or any other class better in the future, make you more efficient in serving your fellow-men in general, and what is not least, you will understand yourself better



and will thus be enabled to accomplish greater things in your own behalf.

There is a recompense, furthermore, in the fact of pleasant associations. The associations between teacher and pupils always should be and generally are, pleasant. If you do your work in a cold, perfunctory manner, without becoming interested in the different members of the class and without trying to win their affections, then you will experience no such pleasant emotions, and when you separate from your class there will be no breaking of tender ties. But if you have won their affection and have imparted yourself to them, you will always feel a deep interest in them, though miles and years may separate you. And there is satisfaction in knowing that there are at least a few in the wide world upon whom you have impressed yourself for good and who think of you as one of their benefactors.

It is furthermore an advantage to come into close contact with the bright, cheerful disposition of children. The hour with the Sunday-school class ought to be a bright spot in the week. Sometimes we have naughty minds to control, but as a rule the class is teachable, and it is a real pleasure to get into child-life, to be looked and smiled upon, to learn their thoughts and feelings and to be reminded of what we ourselves ought to be, for "except ye be converted,

and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

Last of all, God has an eternal reward for all those who serve Him faithfully, and the greater your service upon earth, the richer your reward in heaven.

## IV. THE AIM.



**W**E have spoken both of the undesirable and the desirable features connected with teaching in the Sunday-school. If you are ready to face the former and to rejoice at the latter, we are ready to go a step farther.

In every undertaking we must have some definite end in view, otherwise our work will be aimless and of necessity a failure. It is the mark of an idiot to be doing something without a purpose. In addition, the object had in view must be a definite one. If you should see a man getting together a lot of lumber, stones, brick, and the like, you would naturally ask what he is going to do. I am going to build a house, he might reply. Very well, then he is not an idiot, he has an object in view. But no, you would hardly stop with your first question, you would want to know what kind of a house he expects to build. It is a sensible question and unless the man gives a definite answer, you would shake your head with grave fears, lest he make a botch of his building. There are many styles of houses and unless he knows from the beginning just what kind of a house he expects to build, it will quite probably be no kind — fit to live in.

The plan of the oak is contained in the acorn. It will never turn out to be a maple, or chestnut, or

sunflower ; the tree may grow to be tall and slender, or short and bushy, straight or crooked, thrifty or stunted, owing to environments ; but no matter, it will be an oak. Every work undertaken should be a seed in principle and as the work unfolds itself the definite end becomes apparent.

What is the object of your teaching in the Sunday-school? What definite thing are you trying to accomplish? And I mean not the object of a particular lesson or series of lessons, but what is the one object of your teaching year in and year out?

If I should now call upon each one of you to give a definite answer to this question, I might perhaps get as many answers as I have teachers. And this might seem to indicate that you are not at all clear in your minds just what the object of your work is. You would all be building houses, but each one would probably have a different style in view and some might not even be sure as to the style.

I press this matter somewhat, not to make it appear that you do not know what you are teaching for, but especially to put you to thinking and that you may keep clearly before you just what you are working for as teachers. You should have a definite end in view and you should have it in view constantly. Every Sunday you should aim to bring your class, or rather the individuals of the class, a little nearer to that mark ; every week you should put a few strokes upon the

house to complete and perfect it. And remember that the racer keeps his eye on the goal, the builder on the draught before him.

What now is the object to be accomplished by the Sunday-school teacher? One teacher will say, To cause the scholars to know God's Word. That is a very good answer, and if the teacher keeps this object clearly before him, his work, other requisites being present, will not be a failure. "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me," says the Lord. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God," says St. Paul. He likewise says that the Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation. The Psalmist says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." These are but a few of the many passages which show that to learn God's word is the way of life. You will therefore make no mistake, if you keep before you nothing more than this, that every Sunday you will teach your class some truth of God's word. The word does not only give light that they may see the way of life, but also strength to walk upon that way. You are thus applying the means by which their souls can be saved and by which alone they can be saved.

Another teacher may answer, My object is to make Christians of my scholars. That is also a very good answer, but it needs some careful explanation. With

reference to this question we may need to divide your class, for it presupposes that your scholars are not Christians, or at least not all of them. Ordinarily, however, it is to be assumed that they are already Christians, for all children who have been baptized and have had some instruction in God's word and in Christian life are to be looked upon as children of God. They may be very imperfect Christians, very naughty, but grown-up Christians are sometimes worse than naughty. It would be wrong, then, to say of this portion of your class that you are going to make Christians of them. In some denominations the opinion prevails that children, though they have been baptized and trained up in the fear of God, are yet not converted, and that it must therefore be the teacher's chief object to bring them to Christ and thus make Christians of them. But this view is not Lutheran, nor Scriptural either. However, you can make better Christians of them and bring them nearer to Christ, just as it must be the object of every Christian to grow in grace unto the end. But if there are any in the class who have not been baptized, nor instructed in God's word, of these you can rightly say that you shall try to make Christians of them.

But there is need here for a little caution of another kind. Remember that you cannot make Christians, nor even better Christians, by talking simply about morality, that is, shunning sin and practicing virtue,

but only by applying God's word. Thus you must also keep in mind the previous answer, that the object is to teach God's word. That is the means for making Christians or better Christians.

But some one might answer that my object is to make good boys and girls. The answer would not be satisfactory. The word "good" is used in a great many ways and in a great many ways, too, that are not good. We speak of a good cake or a good apple, of a good horse or a good cow. We speak, too, of good acts that are by no means Christian acts, and we speak of good boys and girls, good men and women, who are by no means Christian boys and girls, or Christian men and women. So, too, you might succeed in making good boys and girls of your scholars, and yet at the end they might be as far from being Christians as at the beginning. Indeed, you might start with Christians and in the end make them so good as no longer to be Christians at all. What I mean is that, if you aim to drill your class simply in nice outward deportment and in habits of morality that catch the eye, then you are making them good in a sense, but Christians in no sense at all. You must make plain, then, what kind of good you mean. If you mean good Christian boys and girls, the answer will pass. But since the word is applied to so many things that have nothing to do with Christianity, and since so many people think that a mere moral goodness is all that

is required to make one a Christian, or at least as good as a Christian, you had better not tell your class that your object is to make them good. They might not understand you; rather tell them that your object is to have them learn and love God's word.

Another teacher may say, My object is to help my pupils to be saved. The answer is, of course, quite correct, especially as pointing out the final end of your work: You want your scholars to be saved. But this can only be done by having them learn God's word, so that we virtually have the first answer again.

I might receive still other answers, but they could no doubt be classified under those which have already been considered. The answers, furthermore, have been sufficiently explained to show clearly just what end you must seek to accomplish in your work. You have before you children or young persons and your object is to teach them God's word that they may grow up as true children of God and be saved in the end. Many things will come up that you will have to talk about—many things, perhaps, that are not directly connected with the great object of your work, but everything should be made to incline toward that end. What cannot be so inclined should not be allowed to consume much time, for the time is short and the end to be accomplished is great.

In conclusion let me once more impress upon you the importance of keeping before you the great object



of your work. It will not only keep you in the right course, but it will also fill you with enthusiasm. When you approach your class do not think simply of the fact that you have a lesson to teach and that you want to teach it in the best manner possible, but that you are going to give your class something that will do their souls good, make them fuller of knowledge, stronger in faith, warmer in love and more willing in service. Teaching is drudgery if one's thoughts do not go beyond the mere act of teaching. The mechanic must look beyond the stroke of the hammer or the swing of the saw for inspiration and enthusiasm. Keep before you that for Christ's sake you are aiding in the saving of souls; it will help you concentrate your thoughts and efforts on the great object of your work; it will inspire, enthuse and strengthen you, so that your work will not be a burden upon your hands, but a pleasure.

## V. ONLY A NAME.



**T**HIS evening we come to speak of teaching itself. As teachers in the Sunday-school you have a great many things to do aside from actual teaching in the class. We have already spoken of some of these and we shall speak of still others. But talks on these things will perhaps be more helpful, if we first get into the clear as to what teaching really is. I fear there is much misapprehension with reference to this matter, that much goes for teaching in the Sunday-school which is not teaching in the proper sense; there is the name, but not the thing.

Allow me to state first of all that a teacher is not made by electing him to that position. If that were the only requisite, nothing would be easier than to make teachers. One is not a teacher simply because he holds that position, for one must not only hold a position, but also fill it. The Sunday-school record may not always give the correct number of teachers in the school. How many eyes has a man, if you call his nose one? Three, you say. Not at all, we say. The fact that you count the nose an eye does not make it so by any means. How many teachers have you in your Sunday-school? I may ask of a brother minister. Twenty, is the reply. But how many *teachers* have you? I repeat. Apprehending the meaning of my question he now answers, Well, I hardly know.

We thus see that we can appoint teachers and call them teachers, but the question still remains, Are they teachers, do they actually teach? If they do not, they are not teachers in the true sense, no matter what they may be called, for there is a vast difference between holding a position and filling it.

Let us pass on now and notice a few things which often pass for teaching, but in reality are not teaching in the proper sense.

First, a person may think that he has taught a class when he has talked to it for half an hour. He accordingly prepares the lesson with great care so that he can give the substance thereof from beginning to end in a nice continuous talk. At the end he congratulates himself upon having gone through with it without a break. It may have been a very nice talk, or lecture, or even a little sermon, but it was not teaching. Telling is not teaching yet; it may be necessary to teaching, but teaching itself means something else. I want you to see this point. Yet do not think that from now on you will not need to tell your classes anything, since telling is not teaching. You will be obliged to tell them things in order to teach them, but you will by no means have taught them everything which you have told them. If telling alone were teaching, the latter would be an easy thing to do, as easy as whistling a tune to the birds and trees.

For this reason, too, we do not call preaching teaching. People are taught through preaching and that is one object of preaching. But to indicate how limited the amount of teaching accomplished through preaching often is, it needs only be stated that the most simple truths may be proclaimed a hundred times from the pulpit, yet some of the hearers will not know them. I am reading this paper to you, but my mere reading is not teaching it. You, no doubt, learn something from it and in so far you are being taught, but the mere reading of the paper did not do it. I could conceive of reading the same paper to a company of persons who would learn nothing from it. For the sake of emphasis, then, let me repeat: Do not think you have taught your classes simply because you have talked to them about the lesson. It is not difficult for the average person to talk about an object of which he knows something, some can even talk fluently about things of which they know little or nothing. Hence, talking to a class, either about the lesson or about something else, is the easiest way of getting through, but it is usually also the least productive of good results.

Furthermore, simply to hear the class recite the lesson or tell what they know about it, is not teaching the class. The pupils may have taught themselves in preparing the lesson, they may have learned some facts or some divine truth which they did not know before, but by reciting these things to you as teacher, they are

not learning anything additional and in consequence are not being taught. This reciting may be useful or even necessary, yet the reciting itself is not teaching.

Likewise to have pupils simply memorize Scripture passages and printed answers to printed questions is not teaching. Nothing is meant to be said here against memory work; work of that kind should be done and far more of the Scriptures should be memorized than is being done. Yet do not think that when your class has fluently recited a number of passages and answers to questions, you have really taught the class. A good work may have been done, yet we would not call it teaching. For it is possible that they understand little or nothing of what they have memorized, and where there is no knowledge of a new truth, nothing has been learned and nothing taught. Please understand that nothing is said here against memory work. On the contrary, I want to encourage it. If our little folks in Sunday-school would only learn the Catechism by heart, and acquire a good stock of Scripture passages and some hymns, much would be accomplished, more in some cases, perhaps, than by the teaching we have. Some teachers find it difficult actually to teach, but they might have reasonable success in having children do memory work. Yet we would not call that teaching.

Furthermore, it is not teaching when you have pupils read the answers from the book or lesson leaf.

Pupils can do this without having previously studied the lesson at all, and of the answers they read they may understand little or nothing. Here nothing has been learned and nothing has been taught. It is the very worst kind of teaching. Yet much of just such work is done in our Sunday-schools. We cannot very well avoid it altogether, partly because we cannot prevail upon our classes to prepare their lessons properly so that the leaf or book may be laid aside in the class, partly, too, because we are not good enough teachers, not being capable of holding their attention and imparting what they do not know. We, however, try to supplement the method by asking some questions that are not directly answered in the book, and also by asking questions on the answer read. This will put the pupil to thinking and open the mind for new truths. We, of course, also add explanations wherever it seems necessary. By these means we try actually to teach. But once more, do not think you have taught the class when they have simply read the answers from the book or paper.

These various methods are more or less used in teaching, and, indeed, need to be. They should therefore be done carefully and conscientiously both on the part of the teacher and the pupil. They are things that belong to teaching, though they are not teaching itself. And a teacher may not be able to employ much more than these methods, yet if this work is carefully

done much good may be accomplished. Let us remember this that a poor method well carried out is better than a good method poorly carried out. A good carpenter will build a better house with poor tools than a poor carpenter with good tools. Do not be discouraged therefore and think that you will throw up the work just because you may not be able to make use of the very best methods of teaching. Our fathers raised large crops without the modern improved farm implements. Perhaps in the end more depends upon your own knowledge of God's Word and upon your love and interest in the work than upon the most correct methods of teaching.

But what is it to teach? In what does it really consist? When can I say that I have taught my class? Not, as has been pointed out, when you have stood before your class half an hour and have done this or that, but *when you have caused your scholars to know something which they did not know before*. It will be seen in future papers that the teacher has other and very important means of influencing the scholars than simply by causing them to know something. It will be seen that all of the teacher's work is not mere teaching. But just now I am speaking of but this one phase of his work, teaching in the strict sense of the term. I aimed to guard against some misapprehensions and to lead you to a clearer knowledge of your own work.

Teaching, then, is causing some one to know some-

thing; you have taught the lesson and your class when you have led them to know something about the lesson which they did not know before. What method you employed does not matter as to this point, just so the class has actually learned something.



## VI. WHAT TEACHING IS.



**I**N my last paper I pointed out what teaching is not. That is, a number of things are often done in class that pass for teaching, but in reality are not in themselves teaching. Simply to talk to the class, or to have the pupils recite certain passages and answers to questions, or to have them read the lesson, or to read from a book or lesson leaf the answers to a list of questions, all this in itself is not teaching. Unless the class actually learns to know something which it did not know before, it was not taught. The object in emphasizing these matters was to make you feel that you must not be satisfied simply with having done this or that, but that you should have the assurance that your class after the lesson really knows something which it did not know before.

Teaching them consists in causing someone to know something which he did not know before. This embraces two things: First, the teacher must really impart knowledge. It is plain that the class can receive nothing from the teacher, if the teacher offers nothing. I may preach what I might call a sermon, but if there is nothing in the sermon, no thought, or else everything jumbled and confused, the congregation would, of course, not be edified. They could not, even if they *would*, for one cannot take where there

is nothing to take. A dry cow gives no milk. So, also, if your explanation of a certain fact in connection with the lesson does not explain, then do not be surprised to find that your scholars did not learn anything from it. Or if you should talk to your class for twenty minutes on some subject, but your talk should be indefinite, confused, or not to the point, then again they could learn little or nothing. It is not the object here to show in what manner or by what methods the teacher may offer knowledge to the class, whether by talking to the class on the lesson, or by questions, or otherwise; the object is simply to emphasize the fact that, whatever the method, the teacher must actually offer the class knowledge, and in such a way, too, that they can grasp it. This latter thought is important; the fox cannot reach grapes that hang too high, nor a sheep grass on the other side of the fence.

The other side in teaching is this, that the person taught must really receive something. This part is no less important to the process of teaching than the first. The person taught cannot have learned anything, if he did not receive some additional knowledge from the teacher's work. If a man goes away empty from the table, he has not been fed, no matter how much may have been set before him.

And so far as simply offering knowledge is concerned, the teacher may have done his work well. He

may have offered a sufficient amount and in a very satisfactory manner, too, yet the class, because of indifference, inattention, or from some other cause, may not have received what was offered. The class was, consequently, not taught, for they did not learn anything new concerning the lesson.

It is seen from this that there are some very important matters to be considered aside from the naked process of teaching. There are other things, and things, too, that are very important, for the teacher to do besides simply offering the class knowledge. Likewise there are other things for the class to do besides simply receiving what the teacher offers. Here, however, I shall not speak of those things. There are a number of things yet connected with teaching proper that must be looked at before we can pass on.

For one thing, we must consider the importance of the impartation of knowledge. The teacher's other work will likewise be seen to be important, yet it must always and in the main be subservient to the work of teaching proper. His personal bearing, the influence of his character, his ability to enlist the attention of the class, his love for his scholars, these, and other things, will do much toward rendering his whole work successful, but they will do this chiefly by making his class susceptible to the reception of the truth. Some teachers may do good work by these means; indeed,

there may be some who in this way can do more good in the Sunday-school than by actual teaching. Their strength lies in winning the affections. They have special gifts in that direction, with perhaps little or no talent for teaching proper. Yet it is plain that if they had the additional gift of teaching, they could do much better work.

The supreme importance of the impartation of knowledge in the Sunday-school is due to the fact that God's Word must make the child of God and save the soul. "If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." These words of our Savior show plainly that it is only by knowing the truth that men can be made free; that is, saved from the curse and service of sin. The child needs bread, and divine truth is that bread. This *knowing* the truth means, of course, more than a mere intellectual knowledge of it. One may have much of such knowledge and yet be a slave to sin. What he knows may not exert any influence upon him because of his own hardness of heart and no change can, therefore, be effected. But the fault lies not with the knowledge, but with his hard heart which resists the gracious influence of that knowledge. Not always the one, therefore, who knows most of God's Word is the best Christian, but he is the best in whom most of that Word has become life to him. So in your class, the

child that is most apt to learn may not be the most Christian child. It takes some aptness to engage in wickedness.

Yet the most important thing still is to teach the scholars to know the word of truth, for although with this knowledge they may still go astray, yet without it they cannot possibly go right. The truth enlightens the mind, so that it sees the will of God and the way of life. But it does more, it at the same time offers the power to do the will of God and to walk in His way. The apostle says that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. It is not only knowledge, but also saving power. When you then teach your class to know the Gospel, you at the same time give them God's power to save their souls. But this knowledge they cannot get except by actually learning to know the Gospel, what it is and what it means to them, and they cannot learn it from you unless you actually teach it them. Different methods and means may be used, but what is essential is this, that they actually be taught to know the truth as it is in Jesus.

Summing up, then, what was said in this and the preceding paper, we have this, that you have actually taught your class, not simply when you have talked to them for half an hour, or heard them recite certain answers or passages, whether from memory or from the book or lesson leaf, but when you have actually

caused your class to know something about God's Word that they did not know before. And this means, not simply that you have actually offered knowledge, but also that they have received that knowledge which alone can make them wise unto salvation. Although, then, there may be many other things for the teacher to do, yet the main thing is actually to teach his class.

## VII. THE WHAT.



**I**N the two preceding papers I tried to point out what teaching really is. To teach some one is to cause that person to know something which he did not know before. To teach in the Sunday-school is to cause the class to know something about God's Word that they did not know before.

Teaching in the Sunday-school thus seems to be a very simple thing. But some simple things are very hard to do, and many things are connected with the doing. It is a very simple thing to sing, for example, yet few realize the time, care, practice and expense that the accomplished singer has devoted to his chosen art. There are many things which he must know and do before he can thrill his audience with his voice. So teaching in the Sunday-school requires more things than one. First of all there are three things to be considered, viz.: The teacher must know what to teach, whom to teach, and how to teach. This evening we can speak only of the first: He must know what to teach.

If teaching your class were nothing more than to hear them recite what they learned during the week, then of course you as teacher would not need to know much about the lesson. Nothing more would be required than to keep your eye on the lesson and see

that each scholar recites correctly what he was expected to learn. But we have already seen that that would not be teaching. Your class would simply tell you what they have learned, but you would impart no knowledge to them.

It is plain too that you cannot teach your class what you do not know yourself. You cannot talk about such a thing intelligently, much less really teach it. You know what Jesus said about the blind leading the blind, that both of them fall into the ditch. Perhaps you have felt already, when you were through with the lesson, that you and your class were in the ditch. It is not a pleasant place to be, especially if one feels that the class knows where you all are. The only way to keep yourself and the class out of the ditch is to know thoroughly what you are going to teach.

But what is it that you must know? When with reference to your own knowledge of the lesson are you ready to teach? When are you reasonably sure that you can lead your class along without stumbling and floundering about?

First of all, you need to know and realize that the lesson which you are going to teach is from the Bible and hence is a part of God's Word to man. This, it is true, is a very general requirement, but nevertheless it is a very essential one. It is one that will go far toward giving the right tone to your whole work of teaching. If your lesson were one in arithmetic or



music or sewing, you would certainly approach your class otherwise than when you come before them with the purpose of teaching them something of what the great God in heaven has said to men. This requirement does not give you any knowledge of the particular lesson which you are to teach, but it does impress you with a sense of the importance and responsibility of your work.

But further, you must know the lesson itself. This is evident, you say. Yes, it is evident; but what does it mean to know the lesson? Surely, not simply where it is found. Neither to know simply what the lesson is about. The lesson next Sunday is on temperance. This you can know and yet know nothing about the lesson. Just what does the lesson say about temperance? That is what needs to be known. Last Sunday the lesson was about Manasseh's wickedness and repentance, but just what had the lesson to say about these things? Just *what* were his sins and *how* was he brought to repentance? When did he live? Where did he live? What lessons there for us with respect to sin, with respect to repentance, with respect to forgiveness? These and many other questions had to be asked, and unless you gave satisfactory answers to them, you cannot say that you thoroughly knew what you were to teach. A lesson may contain matter that pertains to geography or to the customs of the people and times; it may be connected with secular

history, or involve questions of trade, commerce, farming, building, government and the like. You may say that such things are only of secondary consideration. The main thing is the divine truth of the lesson. That is true, and yet these other things are also there, and they are there for a purpose, and you should know this purpose. But the object here is not to analyze a lesson to find out all that it contains, but simply to impress you with the fact that whatever the lesson does contain that you must know, or else you do not know your lesson, and what you do not know you cannot teach, no matter if you talk about it from the beginning to the end of the class hour.

It is, of course, understood that when we say you must know all that is in the lesson, it is not meant that you must really have fathomed the lesson. No man is able to do that. I had reference rather to the breadth of the lesson than to its depths. You may take a child into a garden and teach it quite thoroughly concerning the things on top of the ground, the plants, flowers, vegetables, and the like, while you may not be able to teach it anything concerning the things under the ground, which it cannot see, as clay, rocks, minerals, and the like. So there may be many deeper things in the lesson that you do not know at all, and yet the things lying nearer the surface, and which the class ought to learn, these you may know quite adequately. By the "what" of the lesson we under-

stand, therefore, that which a teacher is reasonably expected to know and which the class ought to learn. Of course, the deeper you can go the better, yet the deepest knowers are not always the best teachers, especially for a class of children or young people.

Furthermore, you must know your lesson in such a way, too, that you are able to decide as to the relative value of the things it contains. One may teach very well, that is, cause the class to know distinctly certain things in the lesson, but if they have not been taught the essentials of the lesson, little or no good has been done. If in last Sunday's lesson a teacher had instructed his class thoroughly concerning the location and power of the Assyrian kingdom, or concerning Manasseh's improvements in the city of Jerusalem, or even concerning idolatry as practiced by the Jews, but would not have caused the class to know what the nature of repentance and forgiveness is, he would not have taught the lesson, nor have done any real good to his class. Questions of geography, chronology, customs and habits of people, and the like, ought to be known when connected with the lesson, but it is a serious mistake to spend much time on them, or in other ways make the impression as though they were the most important things in the lesson. They are often very interesting, and, to many, more interesting than the essentials of the lesson, and besides, to know something about these things has a kind of show of

learning which it is difficult for some teachers to resist, who make more of these secondary matters than of those things that are really food for the soul. The great thought in the lesson on Manasseh was his repentance and forgiveness. Other things belonged to the lesson and needed to be taught, but this is the nail that needed to be driven home and clinched. There are more important things about a person than the clothes he wears. You know your lesson, therefore, when you know the relative value of the things contained in the lesson so that you will give most time and attention to that which is most essential.

Still further, you must know your lesson also with reference to the class you are teaching. Every lesson, and some lessons in particular, should be taught and applied otherwise to a class of children than to a class of grown people. The lesson on temperance for next Sunday is a good example. We do not talk temperance to a little child as we do to a young man. You should furthermore not take into consideration simply your class as a whole, but also the individual members of the class. They are not all constituted alike, nor are all upon the same moral plane, nor are all of the same degree of knowledge or of power of understanding; some perhaps are not baptized, some perhaps had no home training. These are all differences that must be taken into consideration in the preparation of your lesson, that is, you should know the lesson with

reference to these differences so that you can give to each one what it especially needs. It's a little like prescribing medicine; quinine will not do for every case. This consideration requires a knowledge of your class, but of that I shall speak in the next paper.

Finally, this knowledge of the lesson you must have in your mind clear, distinct, definite. It is not enough simply to know that this and that is in the lesson, but you should have them in your head, and each thought of the lesson in a different part of your head, so that you can get hold of one without dragging the other out with it. You should have a clear mental picture of the lesson in your mind, and then proceed to transfer this picture, piece by piece, to your class. Teaching would then be a transfer of the picture in your own mind to the canvas of the mind of the class. When you have such a knowledge of the lesson then it has become your own. You do not simply know something about the lesson, but you know it as your own. It is a part of your stock of knowledge, and you can now give it to your class as your own, and not simply as something which you digged out of the lesson for your class, but not for yourself. This is a great element in teaching; it's like taking bread hot from the oven.

## VIII. THE WHOM.



**T**HE subject of my last paper was "The What," that is, the teacher must know what he is to teach. He cannot impart to others what he does not know himself. This calls for a thorough study of the lesson as part of the preparation for teaching.

But this is not all. The teacher must also know whom he is to teach. This calls for a study of his scholars as a further preparation for teaching. Often teachers are not conscious of this part of their work. The facts to be brought out here seem so self-evident that little stress is laid upon them. It goes without saying, says one, that we must teach a child differently from a grown person, a child from a Christian home differently from one from an un-Christian home, a child with a dull mind differently from one with a bright mind, a rude and self-willed boy differently from a tractable one, and so on throughout the list of individual differences.

But the very fact that these matters seem so self-evident is sometimes a reason why they are overlooked. In planting shrubs we must not overlook their plain differences. All plants have roots and are to be planted in the ground, but all are not treated just alike. You get your lesson so that you think *you*

know it, but without seriously considering whether you can impart it to your class in that form; that is, are they able to see and understand it as you do? If they are not, you cannot teach the lesson in that form, no matter how well you may know the lesson yourself.

One of the first, and also one of the chief things which you will need to know about your class is their actual knowledge of the Bible and of divine things. This information will largely guide you both with reference to what you will give them, whether bread and meat or only milk; also with reference to how you will teach them, especially what words you will use in conveying your thoughts. A word means simply nothing to a child, unless he knows what the word stands for.

First, *what* shall I teach my class? The chief thought in the lesson may be beyond the comprehension of your scholars. It may be a matter in which they have had no experience yet and from the nature of the case can have none, or at least very little. The doctrine of regeneration, for example, cannot be comprehended by a child of six or eight years, at least not as it is usually taught and explained. It is true that this doctrine, and almost all needful doctrines, can be taught even little children, but it must be done in a way which meets the capacity of their little minds. Or it may be that the lesson is on a subject that is not

at all applicable to children, for example, a lesson on parental duties. But if it would be out of place to teach little children how parents are to deal with their children, it would be perfectly in place to teach them how children should behave toward their parents. There is always some thought in the lesson, even if it is not the main thought, or some feature of it, that is suitable for the class, and that is what you should give it. But to this end you must know the class. The doctor knows each one of his patients and prescribes accordingly.

Secondly, what you teach must be given in the right way. Here I want to speak in particular of the language used. What is the stock of words of your class or what is their knowledge of things generally? Usually we assume that our Sunday-school scholars know much more than they actually do. Some years ago an experiment was made on the school children in Boston who were entering the primary grade. The object was to find out how much they knew about the common things of life. "Out of some two hundred of these children they found that one-fifth did not know their right hand, or their left; one out of every three had never seen a chicken; two out of every three had never seen an ant; one out of three had never consciously seen a cloud; two out of three had never seen a rainbow; more than half of them were ignorant of the fact that wooden things are made out of trees;



more than two-thirds of them did not know the shape of the world; nine-tenths of them could not tell what flour is made of. And so on through a long list of lesser and larger matters in the realm of common things."

If this examination had been on spiritual things and things of the Bible, the showing would no doubt have been worse still. The practical lesson to be drawn is therefore evident: Be slow to assume that your scholars know this or that fact in the Bible or this or that truth. Do not take it for granted that your class knows the terms and phrases commonly used in speaking about divine and religious things. Your lesson may be on justification, or on regeneration, or on conversion, or on the law and Gospel, be sure that your class knows the meaning of these words, otherwise they will mean nothing at all, or else the wrong thing, to the class. And remember that you can tell all about justification or any of the above terms without using the terms themselves.

So likewise do not take it for granted that your class knows much Bible history. Do not exemplify faith and obedience by referring to Abraham's offering Isaac, unless your class knows that occurrence. Do not hold Joseph up as a pattern of piety, unless your class knows something of his history. There is no better way of illustrating and enforcing our lessons than by means of Bible stories and Bible

facts, but usually we must first teach these before we can use them. In the great majority of cases a mere reference or statement will not suffice. To say to a class that you must trust in the Lord as David did when he killed the giant would to many be only a puzzle, or probably a nursery story which they had never heard.

But aside from the mental capacity of your scholars and the degree of actual knowledge which they possess, you must also take into consideration their natural tempers, dispositions, tastes and the like. Really every child needs its own peculiar teacher; or, to put it in another way, the teacher must be a different teacher for every child under his care. A certain successful teacher said that if he had fifty scholars, he would try to be fifty different teachers. All the scholars in your class, of course, are expected to learn the same things, for there is only one way and one truth and one life. But you have as many minds as you have scholars, each one with its own peculiarities, and each one will probably want to get hold of that truth in a different way. Now the thing to do is to have each one get hold of the truth of the lesson, and you should be prepared to help each one do this, if necessary, in his own way. What is required of the teacher here is not easy; it means, in general, that you give attention to each scholar individually. If your presentation of a truth to the entire class did not

reach one or the other, turn to these individually and give it in a way that they will see it. It makes your work harder and more tedious, but it is results that you are after and not the getting through easily.

There are still other important differences that must be reckoned with in teaching, such especially as are due to home surroundings and training. You have a different child before you in one who has had a proper home training from one whose training has been neglected and whose home surroundings have been hurtful, and different kinds of treatment will be required. The latter will need advice and admonition which the former may not need, and special kindness and patience may likewise be required. Just what needs to be done in each case might be hard to say; the teacher must study to know this. Hence, too, in preparing your lessons you should follow your scholars into their homes and daily surroundings, keep before you their companions, occupation of parents and scholars, locality and the like. Teach the lesson with reference to these things; that's making practical application, laying the plaster where the flesh is sore.

There is still another difference among scholars that needs to be noticed and that should influence teaching, a difference entirely ignored in some churches, but not in the Lutheran Church. It is this that children of Christian parents and who have been

baptized are to be looked upon as children of God and hence as converted and as members of the Church, while those who have not been baptized and have received no Christian training are not to be so considered. In regard to the latter it is of course not in place to make them painfully sensible of the fact that they are not Christians, especially if they are very young. The better part is to show them Jesus' love and so invite them rather than drive them. On the other hand, it is altogether wrong and hurtful to make children who have been baptized and are properly trained feel that they are not Christians and that they need to be converted, and that the object of the Sunday-school is to bring them to Christ instead of only leading them further along in Christ to whom they were already given in holy baptism. They need more conversion just as we older people do and some of them may need very much of it, yet we are to look upon them as lambs of Jesus whom we are to care for as He said to Peter, "Feed My lambs."

Taken together, we see that there are many reasons why you as teachers need to study your classes as well as your lessons. It must be seen, too, that it is difficult to teach a class in this individualistic way; it is difficult anywhere, but especially in the Sunday-school where the teacher has the class but one-half hour in a week. Do not make too great a demand upon yourselves, therefore, in this matter.

## IX. THE HOW.



**I**T has been pointed out that the teacher must know what he is to teach and whom he is to teach. But this is not all; he must also know *how* to teach, Of the three requisites, this is doubtless the most difficult, especially when we consider that our teachers as a rule have had no special training in methods of teaching.

In the first place, the knowing how is a very important element in teaching. It is one thing to know a truth, but it is another thing to be able to cause someone else to know that truth. Not every explanation explains, just as every builder does not build in the proper sense. A man has all the necessary material for building a house, he also knows all about the material, knows just what each thing is to be used for. He likewise has a splendid draught of the house, the entire plan and all the specifications, and understands them. He is, furthermore, supplied with an excellent kit of tools. Is he ready to build the house? Not unless he is able to use the square, the saw, the chisel; not unless he is able to make a mortise, a tenon, a joint and the like. He must know how, otherwise he will never build a decent house, no matter how much excellent material

he may have to work on. The following incident is related: A freedman was engaged to slaughter a calf for a plantation owner, as the latter did not know how. When the work was done he was asked what he charged. "Fifty cents," was the reply. "Fifty cents?" inquired the owner. "Why, it is not worth more than twenty-five cents." "That's right, massa," said the colored man; "twenty-five cents for killing the calf and twenty-five cents for knowing how."

A doctor fresh from the medical university may know very much about medicine, all, in fact, that needs to be known; he may likewise adequately understand the physical organism of the human body; he may understand, too, all the diseases with which the body may be afflicted, and may know just what remedies to prescribe in each particular case. But if in actually treating a case he becomes confused, gets things mixed up, does not know what to do first and what second, and cannot put his knowledge to practical use, then, no matter how much he knows, he is not able to practice medicine.

In every work one must know how, if the work be no more than kindling a fire. And if in natural things already this matter is so important, it is far more important where one is dealing with living truth and immortal souls as in the Sunday-school. Men who prepare for the ministry do not occupy all their time in school simply in learning to understand

God's Word and the teachings of the Church, but they use a good portion of that time in learning how to conduct their office. Almost every intelligent layman knows enough to preach a nice little sermon on this or that subject, but he may not know the how of it. He cannot put what he does know in proper shape so that others can get hold of it. So, too, in the case of Sunday-school teachers; their greatest weakness is not always that they do not know enough, but rather that they are not able to impart what they do know. Of course, more knowledge would not be an inconvenience. And if we know a thing well ourselves, we are generally able to make others see it as well. Yet if you could always cause your scholars to know all that you yourselves know concerning any one lesson, very satisfactory work would be done.

But we need to go further here. Not only must you know the how of teaching, but you must be able actually to teach in that way. And right here is where the greatest difficulty is really met. One may know how a thing ought to be done, but to do it in that way is another matter. A man may know all about the plan of a house and of the material for building; he may know all the tools, too, and what each one is used for, yet for lack of strength or skill he may not be able to build the house. You may know your lesson well, know your class well, and

know also how the lesson should be taught, and yet for some reason you fail to teach the class properly. Doing a thing always implies more than simply to know how; actual skill is required, and that comes only from real practice. How easily the pianist manipulates his fingers upon the keyboard, but it took months and years of patient, persistent practice to bring him to that degree of skill. Some persons are born teachers; that is, they seem to have been naturally fitted for the work. Yet in their case also practice and discipline are required to make them skillful. Much more is this necessary in the case of the average Sunday-school teacher. Look, therefore, upon each lesson which you have taught as a lesson for yourself in teaching. In that way you will not only learn the how, but you more and more acquire skill in applying the proper methods of teaching. Do not think that you are able to teach simply because someone has told you how. It is easy to be told how to saw; just push the saw back and forth. Yet simple as the process is, one who has never handled a saw could hardly saw a board off straight.

But some of you may begin to think that there must be something mysterious about the art of teaching, something strangely difficult, and that you can never hope to accomplish anything worth speaking of as Sunday-school teachers. Well, do not become



frightened, or discouraged, and think that you might as well give up. You have learned to do other things that were difficult and you can learn to do this likewise. Or, rather, you have already learned to teach, but you can learn to teach much better. That's what I want you to try to do, and in this I am trying to help you. And I will say that if you do not care to improve in your teaching and from month to month do better work for your class and for your church, then you are not faithful and you need to repent and do better. I want to see you come here every Sunday morning with this purpose in your hearts: "Today I am going to try harder than ever to teach my class well. I want to teach it better than I did last Sunday. I want every scholar to go home today feeling that he has learned something and that he has been helped in his little life as a Christian." And every Sunday morning, too, as you leave this room I want you to say to yourselves: "I am going to try harder than ever this week to prepare the lesson well for next Sunday; I want to understand it thoroughly and know just how to teach it to my class so that they may get the greatest possible good from it." Teachers who come and go with such purposes in their hearts are going to do good work.

Now in carrying out these purposes each teacher should have his own plan for teaching. You cannot all teach just alike, because, in the first place, you

yourselves are not all just alike. We do not all talk alike, nor do we all think just alike, we do not even all eat just alike, so, too, we are not all expected to teach just alike. In the second place, you do not all have the same kind of scholars; some are older, some are younger; some know more, some less; some are boys and some are girls; some are quiet and easily controlled, some are mischievous. It would be folly to say that they must all be dealt with just alike. For that reason I have already said that each teacher must know his class. Each one, therefore, also must have his own plan for teaching. The how of the one will not do for the other. You should have your plan in general from Sunday to Sunday. For example, your plan may be to ask a great many questions; you should have your questions ready Sunday after Sunday. Your plan may be to add a few illustrations in the way of suitable stories; you should have them ready. The class will expect them and will miss something if you do not give them. But aside from this general plan you should have a plan for each lesson. A part of your preparation should consist in planning clearly just how you will teach that particular lesson. I may understand a certain passage of Scripture quite well, but if I should want to preach a sermon on that text I would have to plan beforehand just what I want to say in that sermon and in what order. There might be much more there than I could say well in

one sermon and hence I would have to make a selection, otherwise the congregation might get much and yet not get much of anything. So, too, I must say what I want to say in the proper order, otherwise the congregation will again not be able to get hold of anything.

That's what I mean when I say that each teacher must make a plan for each lesson. You must be sure that you know just where you are, at any time during the lesson; for if you do not know, surely the scholars will not. And even if your plan should not be the best possible, if you work it out properly, you will accomplish something. A poor plan well carried out is better than a good plan poorly carried out. A poorly planned but well built house is better and more comfortable than a well planned but poorly built one.

## X. ATTENTION.



**T**HIS evening I shall speak to you about attention. No matter how well you may know your lesson, nor how well you may know your class, nor what an excellent plan you may have mapped out for teaching the lesson, if you fail to hold the attention of your scholars, you shall accomplish little or nothing. The best teacher in the world cannot teach a class whose attention is on something else than the lesson. Holding the attention, therefore, though it is not a part of teaching proper, is, nevertheless, one of the most essential features in the work of teaching. To teach without attention is simply no teaching, because nothing is learned. It is like pouring water on marble, there are no open pores there to take in the water. Or it is like talking to a sleeping person; we do not talk long, but first rouse him out of his sleep.

What is attention? Says Archbishop Trench: "He is 'attentive' who, being taught, stretches out his neck so that he may not lose a word." I have preached to people who gave attention just in that way. They were all ears and eyes and, in addition, held their mouths open. They stretched out their necks toward the speaker to get everything he said, and whether he said much or little, they got it. It

will appear from this that attention is something more than a mere passive state of the mind. A sponge will receive water until it is full, but a sponge is no fit representation of an attentive mind. We cannot pour knowledge into the mind like water into a sponge. The mind must be active; not only must there be an eagerness to get knowledge, but there must be a reaching out after it and a getting hold of it. After all, there is not a great difference between taking with the mind and taking with the hand. In each case there is a reaching out and a seizing and a taking to oneself and holding it fast.

Giving attention means more than simply to hear what is being said. A scholar may hear all that the teacher says and yet not know anything correctly of what was said. You have all already heard a chapter read from the Bible, or maybe, read it yourselves, and at the end you were not able to state what the chapter was about. You seemed to be seriously quiet and devotedly giving heed to what was being read, yet withal there was no attention there. Those are the kind of listeners the devil is looking for; there is a form of godliness there, but not the power thereof, and as long as men do not come under the power of God's truth, nothing is being done for them, and the devil is quite well satisfied. We may add here yet that giving attention is more than simply listening. It is possible to listen in a listless manner, and no

good can come from it. Or it is possible for a scholar to listen, not for the purpose of learning something, but only to have it appear that he is attentive. Or it may be that he listens simply to find out what the teacher has to say or knows, and not because he wants to learn the lesson for himself. We must even say that to be interested in the subject of the lesson does not imply attention yet. There can, of course, be no full attention where there is no interest in the thing being taught, but, on the other hand, one may be interested in one phase while the teacher is speaking of another phase of the subject. Or one may be so deeply interested in one's own ideas about the subject as to overlook or neglect entirely the idea with which the teacher at the time is dealing.

There are, of course, many other things that may interfere with attention. A scholar may go to his class with an honest purpose to give attention, he may feel interested in the subject of the lesson, he may earnestly desire to learn something about the lesson, yet there may be one or a dozen things to interfere with his attention. It may be only a remark of some other member of the class, or some occurrence in some other part of the room, or a mistake on the part of the teacher, almost anything is liable to throw the mind off the track. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." That's a good fact to remember, not only in our daily battle with sin, but also in the

Sunday-school class. There is a great deal of flesh in and about your class, i. e., very much that is calculated to interfere with and hinder your work, and every effort will have to be put forth to keep these hurtful influences away. Attention to spiritual things is especially easily interfered with. Sidney Smith said that "A sparrow fluttering about the church is an antagonist which the most profound theologian in Europe is wholly unable to overcome." I myself have seen a June bug drawing the attention of an entire audience from the weightiest matters of God's word. Demosthenes upon one occasion, finding his audience inattentive, stopped in his discourse and asked them to listen for a moment to something of very great importance that he had to tell them. Of course, every one was all ears at once. The orator then went on to describe how two men, traveling from Athens to Megara on a very hot day had hired an ass and both wanted to enjoy the shadow of the animal. One man declared that he had hired the ass and his shadow, too, while the other man contended that he had hired the ass only. With these statements Demosthenes stopped short and was about to retire when the audience, with great eagerness, demanded that he finish his tale. "O ye Athenians," said he then, "will ye attend to me while speaking of the shadow of an ass; and will ye not attend to me when I address you on the most important affairs?"

You see we are fighting against great odds when we are trying to hold the attention of people on spiritual things. But that only makes it necessary that we try the harder. If we were talking about butterflies or the pleasures of an outing, it would not matter so much if we did not have the attention of an auditor, not much would be lost. But here the greatest possible things for time and eternity are at stake, and hence we must not give up without a great fight. The teacher must aim to get real attention, and real attention, as Trumbull says, "includes looking at, listening to, being interested in, and with a positive exercise of the will, reaching out after, the thing demanding attention. Until a scholar is thus attentive, no teacher on the face of the earth is capable of teaching that scholar."

But how secure this attention? That is the question. It is not hard to teach scholars who of their own accord are attentive, just as it is not difficult to sell goods to a man who really wants to buy. But we need teachers who can get the attention of the inattentive, just as the merchant wants salesmen who can sell goods to people who do not care to buy. That, then, is one thing you must not forget, viz.: That you as a teacher are expected to get and hold the attention of your class. Dr. Trumbull tells of a man who bought a fine span of horses on a Saturday. On Sunday he went to church as usual, but he could



not get his mind off those horses. His wife remarked on coming home that she feared his horses ran away with his thoughts in church. He acknowledged that they did and that he was in the wrong, "and yet," he said, "the preacher ought to have pulled me away from those horses." So, remember, teachers, that you must pull your scholars away from the wild horses that are trying to run away with their thoughts.

But how shall we be able to do this? Well, I shall not promise to tell you without fail. I am free to acknowledge that I do not always succeed either. The horses are often stronger than I am. With the best that I can do I sometimes see people going to sleep while I preach. I am told that Bill Nye never had such hearers. But it is a good thing already simply to know the importance of these things. And in addition a few suggestions can be made that will prove helpful. Much often depends on the general impression the teacher makes upon the class. If the teacher himself seems to be uninterested, both in the lesson and in his class, if he goes about his work in a half-sleepy manner, if the lesson has not been prepared well and he hesitates in what he wants to say or do, then it is the most natural thing for the class's attention to be drawn elsewhere than to the lesson. Like the magnetic needle, the mind always points in the direction of the greatest drawing power. A teacher should, therefore, be a magnet, the strongest

possible; every eye and mind of the class should be upon him. You must, therefore, be full of life, full of interest in your work, have a smile for every pupil; in short, be a whole curiosity shop.

Sometimes much depends upon how you start the lesson, for if you can enlist the attention from the very start, you have a distinct advantage. A striking question about the lesson may do this, or a little story, or some remark about your experience during the week. These are little things and may not teach anything directly, but remember that unless you have the class's attention all your best efforts at teaching will be useless. Of course, you must aim to hold the attention to the end, and this is often harder to do than to gain it at the beginning. Here remember that perhaps nothing is so valuable as a good preparation and a good plan for teaching the lesson.

One thing especially that you need to remember also is the fact that you cannot gain the attention of a class of boys and girls simply by telling them that they *ought* to pay attention, that it is their *duty* to listen to God's Word, especially when they are in the Sunday-school or in church. They may acknowledge the correctness of the obligation, but very few will feel bound by that alone. They must be drawn to give attention, not driven.

## XI. CLEAR WATER.



**I**N happy boyhood I delighted to lie flat down upon the green bank of some stream and look down into the transparent water. I could count the smooth pebbles on the bottom, I could see the little schools of fish finning their ways up and down the "hole," I could see the crabs run backward to cover by jerks as fast as you could count, and there were still other inhabitants that made the place interesting. But to see all these things the water had to be perfectly transparent. If it were cloudy, it was hard on the eyes and one soon tired of what should have been pleasure.

Now, my teachers, there is something like this in your teaching. Your scholars are looking into the pool of water, into the lesson as you are teaching it, and the question is, Is the water clear or cloudy? Can they see the objects distinctly or not?

You must all concede that this is a very important matter. The object of teaching is to cause your scholars to know something which they did not know before. If this is not done, your work as teacher is a failure. And that something they must know definitely and correctly; they must know whether the object in the water is a fish, or a crab, or a pebble. If a weary traveler looking for a place of shelter during the coming night should espy in the distance

an object, but if the atmosphere should be so hazy as to make it impossible to determine whether the object was a hill, a barn, a house, or a cloud on the horizon, the knowledge which he has thus gained would be of little practical worth or comfort to him. Coming near, the object might turn out to be only a bare bluff, or it might even have disappeared as a cloud or as smoke. The subject of your lesson, we will say, is Christ the true Vine. If now, after you have taught the lesson, one of your pupils should say, I can clearly see the grape vine with its branches, leaves and fruit, and I can see, too, that useless branches are cut off, but I can't see how Christ is such a Vine, or how this Vine can have anything to do with Christ; you would have to concede, would you not, that the child did not grasp the truth, that it did not get hold of Christ as the Vine, and cannot use Him as He represents Himself under that figure? Knowledge is not only worthless, but it is also incomplete, unless under the proper conditions we know just how to make use of it. I have often seen articles in stores the material and mechanism of which I could describe, but I did not know what they were used for. To me such an object would be useless until I was further instructed as to its use. A trunk and branches and leaves put together in the proper shape make a tree; that a child can see. So unless the child can put together what you gave it in the lesson

and see Christ as the Vine, the lesson has not been properly taught, the child has no clear knowledge of it.

Now, in making a lesson clear not too much dare be assumed with reference to the class's general knowledge. This matter has already been touched upon, but it is so important that it needs to be mentioned again at this place. We are often in danger of assuming that a child knows a thing of which it in reality knows little or nothing. In consequence one or the other point in the lesson is left unexplained and yet probably just this or that was needed to make the child's knowledge of the main truth in the lesson clear. A certain teacher once divulged the secret that she thought Cornelius the centurion was the leader of a musical organization, "Italian band." In using illustrations and making comparisons we in particular need to be careful, for if the class does not know the object compared or that it is used to illustrate, the whole process only confuses. Thus, for example, do not enforce willing service to the Lord by simply referring to Samuel as an example, unless the class knows about Samuel. Neither say with an air of wisdom and as though the nail will now be clinched, that we must all be meek like Moses, unless your class really knows something about Moses and his meekness.

Furthermore, you cannot expect to make the lesson clear to the class unless it is clear in your own mind.

Jesus said to His disciples, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. So we can say here, Blessed are the scholars which see the things the teachers see; but we need to be sure that the teachers see them, else the simile loses its force. If you were trying to point out a bird in the branches of a tree, but did not know just where it was, you would hardly make your companion see it. If you were teaching your class about Christ the Good Shepherd, but did yourself not know the real duties of a shepherd and in what sense Christ is a shepherd, your class would go away with very confused ideas about the Good Shepherd. We cannot see fish swim in murky water, nor stars twinkle on a cloudy night. Probably, therefore, pupils are sometimes accused of being dull when the dullness is really to be sought for in somebody else's head. My eyes may be all right, but if the atmosphere is hazy I cannot see the distant hills. The thing required, therefore, on the part of the teacher is thorough preparation of the lesson and careful planning as to how the lesson can be best taught; and if you really have dull pupils, the more need that the water be perfectly transparent.

Again, to make a lesson clear judgment should be exercised so that the class is not overburdened with matter. When we eat too much our digestive organs are clogged, the food is not assimilated and we feel worse than if we had taken nothing. I have heard

criticisms on sermons that they contained too much matter; I used to think the criticism rather out of place; the more matter the better, thought I. But I have come to see that a sermon may be so deep, so broad and especially so long as simply to overwhelm the mind. A man can carry a sapling on his shoulders very readily, but an oak tree would crush him. These facts need to be considered in particular in the case of young minds untrained in the art of thinking. When a child looks into a stream of water not everything there will at the first attract its attention. It will watch the fish swim, but quite probably hardly notice the pebbles on the bottom, or the grasses and other objects that might interest a more trained eye. Do not think, therefore, that you must give your class just everything that the lesson contains; there may be too much there for the class to grasp in a short half hour. Sometimes teachers complain that the lesson is not long enough, they cannot find enough matter and questions. The fact however, is that the trouble usually lies in the opposite direction. Work up the little lesson properly and you will find matter enough, and remember that it is not what you have gone over in class that counts, but what the scholars take home.

Furthermore, if it be true that lessons usually contain more matter than young minds can master at one hearing, then a selection must be made. And in order to clearness and the proper understanding of

the lesson the chief thought must be selected and pressed home. Ordinarily each lesson contains some one chief fact or thought around which other thoughts cluster. Sometimes it is not so easy to discover just what that thought is. In some cases, too, a lesson may have several very prominent thoughts. But however that may be, the teacher should pick out one or two thoughts which in connection with that particular lesson and on that particular day are to be impressed upon the minds of the class. Last Sunday the chief fact in the lesson was the attempt of King Jehoiakim to destroy God's word (Jer. 36). The chief lesson taught was, we can say, the great value of God's Word; on the one hand, how wicked and foolish it is to attempt to destroy that word; on the other hand, how necessary it is for us to heed God's Word, to learn it and obey it. Many other thoughts suggested themselves in the study of the lesson, but either they were directly related to the above chief thought, or else they deserved to be passed by with slight notice. In short, that lesson was clearly and definitely taught, if the children went home with a distinct impression and conception of the importance of not despising God's Word, but of holding it sacred and gladly hearing and learning it.

Another thing: The chief thought or fact of a lesson should not be glanced at simply, but looked at steadily and from different points of view. If you



should visit some old castle and should look at it only from one side, you would go away with perhaps a distinct impression of how it appears on that one side, but you would have no correct conception of the whole castle. You might some time approach it unknowingly from another side and might not at all recognize the edifice. If your lesson is on Christ the Good Shepherd, hold that thought up and look at it from different sides, how He knows His sheep, leads, feeds, protects them and even dies for them. The result of the teaching should be that when the class hears anyone speak of Christ as the Good Shepherd they will know at once what is meant. Yet do not try to see everything about the castle at one visit; some future time you may be able to take the class inside and investigate the different apartments more fully.

## XII. THE USE OF ILLUSTRATIONS.



**I**N our last lesson I tried to show the importance of making the lesson clear to the class and made some suggestions also as to how this can be done. So much of good results depends upon clearness in teaching that we shall continue the consideration of the subject this evening. In addition to what has already been said there are still other suggestions that will prove helpful to teachers in the art of making the lesson clear. One such is the use of illustrations. I once thought of heading this paper "Pictures," for to me an illustration is always of the nature of a picture, by looking at which I see more clearly some feature of the truth to be illustrated. The word "illustrate" literally means to make bright, or to make shine. So one speaks of the night

"When the moon *illustrates* all the sky."

And Shakespeare says, "To prove him and illustrate his high worth." The purpose of the illustration is in some way to make the truth shine more before the mind's eye than is possible by literal and direct language. We get a better conception of some material object when we can see it with our eyes than from any word description that may be given. So, too, if we can present naked truths in the form of a mental

picture much is usually gained in the way of clearness and completeness. That a soul lost in sin is in an awful condition is a solemn, weighty fact and truth, but it is impossible for the mind to grasp even a small measure of the horror of such a state, unless other aids are brought in to make the truth shine. When now the Psalmist speaks of all the waters going over his head, or that he was in an horrible pit and in the miry clay, or when Jesus speaks of weeping and gnashing of teeth, of fire that is not quenched, of the rich man tormented in flames moaning for a drop of water, then we begin to realize and see what the condition of the lost, or of him who is in fear of damnation must be.

In making use of illustrations we are in good company. Jesus, the world's master teacher, was always drawing pictures for His hearers. Witness His many larger parables. So, too, His teaching throughout is generally full of word-pictures. He speaks of Himself as the door, the vine, the good shepherd, the bread of life, the water of life, the way, and so on. He has His hearers, look at the grass of the field, the lilies, sparrows, birds, foxes, fig-tree and the like. He goes back to Old Testament times and speaks of Moses, David, Solomon, Sheba, Jonah and others. He speaks of His disciples as the light of the world, the salt of the earth, as sheep among wolves; He speaks of the blind leading the blind and

both falling into the ditch, of hypocrites as whited sepulchres, of the measure full, shaken down and running over, of Pharisees devouring widows' houses, of straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel, and so on and so on. In short, when we read the words of Jesus our eyes are constantly kept busy looking at the various objects which He calls up before us in order to make His lessons shine with clearness and life-likeness.

Under illustrations we may group all those means, aside from plain literal language and direct explanation, that are used for the purpose of making the lesson more intelligible, more real and life-like, and for the purpose of impressing the truths more indelibly upon the mind. All the parabolic methods of Jesus' teaching noted above are included under illustrations. Likewise a story or anecdote is meant to illustrate. Reference to facts in science, art, commerce, manufactures, war and the like, or events in history, historical personages, are all means of illustration. Observations which you or your class may have made, experiences in your life or in that of your scholars, are means and often the very best means for illustrating the lesson. I can assure you that there is no lack of material here. If teachers say that they indeed see the value of illustrations, but that they cannot find suitable ones, there may be much truth in the statement, i. e., they may not be able to find them, but it is not true that there are not plenty

to be found. Nor does success in finding them depend entirely on peculiar gifts in that direction, it depends rather upon persistent effort and work. "Seek and ye shall find." Once in a while a gold hunter will stumble upon a nugget or two, but usually he must dig for what he gets, and if he digs at the right place, he will find. We need not dig so uncertainly for illustrations, the world is full of them everywhere; nor is it necessary for you to stake off a claim, the whole world is yours. But you cannot expect these illustrations to come to you just at the hour of teaching and as needed. You must gather them beforehand and work them up in the proper shape and order. This all belongs to the thorough preparation of the lesson; and remember that when the farmer goes to market he goes with a full wagon.

For the sake of convenience we have classed all the means for making a lesson clear and impressive, aside from direct explanation, under the term illustration. There are, of course, many kinds of illustrations, and though it would be interesting and helpful to look at the various kinds in order, yet the matter would become too tedious for our purpose. I shall, however, mention two divisions: the one we can call mental or word illustrations, those viz., where we picture the object, fact or incident to the mind in language; it is purely a mental process throughout, both on the part of the teacher and the taught. Jesus'

illustrations are mostly of this kind. The other kind is made up of visible objects, gestures and the like. Here are to be included charts, especially for primary classes, black-board work, slate-work in the class, maps, also actual objects referred to in the lesson. If the lesson is on the mustard seed, it would not be out of place in primary classes for the teacher to bring some garden seeds along. Or if it is on the seed growing secretly, or on the seed dying in order that it may grow, it would be more than merely interesting to have a few seeds in your pocket and point out to the children the germ of the seed, what part grows and what part dies. Likewise a slate might often be used to good advantage in class.

Now in order to do these things and use them with profit, work is necessary. I want to repeat that. You must put forth effort, that is the only way to acquire proficiency in anything. And I want you to feel, teachers, that we are here for work. A certain colonel on reviewing his troops, found a private missing. "Where is Private ——?" inquired he. "He's shot," came the answer. "All right," said the colonel, "that's what we are here for."

In speaking thus far of illustrations the object chiefly sought was clearness; we should be ready to use any possible and legitimate means or methods in order to make the lesson clear. If a man's sight begins to fail, we put glasses over his eyes. Let us

give our scholars the best possible glasses for looking at the lessons. But illustrations serve other valuable purposes. One is that they arouse increased interest for holding the class's attention. It has been seen already that attention is absolutely necessary to successful work. Holding the attention can therefore not be considered a mere secondary matter in your work. If you are such a gifted teacher as to be able to hold your class without using stories, mental pictures, material objects, and the like, then very well, go on and count yourself most fortunate. But know that such teachers are rare birds. Even Jesus did not as a rule so teach, and He understood the nature of the human mind. Why does the world read more novels than anything else? Largely, of course, because of the nature of these stories, but chiefly because they are stories. Give them the same truths, or untruths, as the case may be, in plain didactic language, and not one-tenth of the amount will be sold. These things are specially true with reference to children: "Tell me a story," is the child's demand. If you can clothe your lesson in a suitable story or hang it up as a picture for the children to look at, you have, in nine cases out of ten, the class on your side, the problem of attention is solved.

Then again, illustrations are calculated to impress the facts and truths of the lesson upon the mind. If

I go to the spring with a leaking bucket, though I dip the bucket full, I will have no water when I get home. Children, and grown people, too, often see and learn things in Sunday-school and at church, but till they get home much of it has leaked out. There are, of course, more reasons for this than one; the devil has many ways of picking up the seed by the wayside. But write the lesson on the mind in the form of a story, or paint it there in a picture, and the chances are that it will stay, at least long enough till it has been partially or altogether absorbed into the life of the person.

But allow me in conclusion to add one warning with reference to the use of illustrations: Remember that they are to be used only to set forth the chief points in the lesson. Often it is easier to talk about and illustrate minor matters in the lesson; do not spend too much time on these. The great things for your classes to get are the spiritual truths of the lesson, not their geography, history or other natural attendants. Do not, for example, spend so much time showing your class the duties and habits of an ordinary shepherd as to have no time left for teaching them about the Good Shepherd Himself. Solid food nourishes the body, not condiments.



### XIII. QUESTIONS.



**T**HIS evening I want to speak to you about the use of questions in your teaching in the Sunday-school. It is usually called the art of catechising. It is a big subject, and even if I were able to tell you all about it, I certainly could not do so in a ten-minute paper. But I hope at least to be able to give you a few facts and hints that may prove helpful to you in your work.

First, a few words as to the importance of our subject. Here we may say that the use of questions has come to be considered indispensable in successful teaching. The only other method is in general that in which the teacher does all the work, i. e., he talks about the lesson or explains it to the class and the latter is expected to do nothing but listen and take in what is said. If they would do this, then all would be well, but just there is where the bird is not in the bush. For various reasons the average boy and girl get very little out of such teaching. If the teacher's talk is clear, pointed, direct, pictorial, illustrative, spirited and the like, the brighter minds in the class will, of course, get an increased benefit, but it takes a first-class speaker to give a talk of that kind. But even then it might be called the lazy man's way of

doing the work, especially on the part of the pupils, for they are not asked to think for themselves, but simply to think over again and to remember what the teacher tells them. Carlyle says, "To sit as a passive bucket and be pumped into, can in the long run be exhilarating to no creature, how eloquent sover the flood of utterance that is descending." Besides, it is usually not a bucket but a jug that is under the pump, i. e., for lack of attention the pupils' mental ears are usually closed, and sometimes their eyes, too, so that the water goes splattering over them but very little into them. This is especially true when teachers, like some pumps, scatter the water very much as they throw it; and most teachers are apt to do this when they use this method of teaching. To give a clear, pointed talk, one that grips the mind, requires severe preparation, whereas an aimless, scattering harangue of twenty minutes that hits no one, and, if it does hit, makes no impression, is within the capacity of the average amount of tongue and calls for little real preparation.

But enough on this point. What is the advantage of the question method? As to the teacher the advantage is perhaps not so very great, unless it be in this, that he is put to greater effort to prepare himself, for the art of skillful catechising is considered most difficult. And anything that makes a teacher work at his lesson may be regarded as an

advantage, when the final results of teaching are considered; he will know the lesson better and hence be able to teach it better, whatever the method of teaching may be. Things easily done are like victories easily won; there is not much in them. But the chief advantage of the question method is on the side of the pupil. First, it gives the pupil something to do. When one teaches by talks he can go right on with his work, whether the class is awake or asleep, for the teacher is doing it all; but teaching by questions requires some one to answer, else the teacher will soon be at the end of the string. It, therefore, draws the scholars into the work; they become co-workers with the teacher, they must bear up their end of the stick. This is important, for the average boy and girl is real "good" only when he is at work or asleep. Give him something to do in the class therefore; if you do not, he will become listless or else find something to do which may not be conducive to edification.

Furthermore, the question method is well calculated to hold the attention. We saw in a former paper that this is important. A plain, clear, pointed, pictorial and spirited talk will, as a rule, hold the attention of the majority in a class, but a series of questions of the same degree of smartness will almost without fail hold the attention of all. This is due chiefly to the fact that the child is required to do something more than simply to listen. And this more is not

simply uttering the words of the answer, but principally thinking out the answer. When he listens to a talk he needs to do nothing more than simply think over again the thought which the teacher gives him, but when he answers a question he must, from his own stock acknowledge and of himself, think out the correct answer.

Right here another distinct advantage comes in. Questions are not intended simply to lead a child to tell what it already knows, but especially to lead it from what it already knows to know something which it did not yet know. This probably is the greatest advantage of the question method and at the same time also the most difficult feature. But, as usual, you see, hard work and great results are paired. It is much better for a child's training and knowledge to lead him to see a new truth by means of a few questions than to tell him outright, without any thinking on his part, what the thing is. For example, the Bible calls a prophet "a man of God." We will assume that the child has been taught what a prophet is, but why is he called a man of God. You can tell the child by means of a little talk, but by far the better way is by means of a few skillful questions to lead the child to find it out for himself. Naturally man does not like to live on charity, he prefers to make his own living, and the boy is father to the man.

There are still other advantages of the question method. For example, there is the personal element. In a straight talk you shoot at the whole class, and even if you always hit the mark, it's a broad shot and no one probably is struck hard. But when you use questions, then you turn sharp-shooter, you pick off one here and one there, you deal with an individual at a time. Again, using questions you can deal with the individual pupils according to their need and mental standing; the forward need not be held back and the backward can be led forward. When you simply talk to your class all must eat from the same dish.

But enough on the point of advantage. I want to say a few words yet as to the "how" of the question method. First, let me say that you must get down on a level with your pupils. It has been said—and experience seems to prove the truth of the statement—that learned men make the poorest teachers of children. With all their knowledge most of them do not know how to get down on a level with little children and the unlearned. Sometimes, therefore, it may be an advantage in teachers when they do not need to get down very far, for get down you must; sheep and lambs do not stand on their hind legs to eat. Dr. Trumbull tells of a little child that was learning to talk but could not say "papa.," He rolled his tongue some way and could only get out "toddle."

The mother and older children were getting discouraged and the little fellow himself seemed to feel bad and did not want to say anything any more. One day his little sister Mary got down on the floor beside him and said, "Now, Charlie, say 'toddle.'" Charlie at once said "toddle." "Oh, mamma," cried Mary, "Charlie can talk; he said 'toddle.'" Charlie felt good over it and was ready for the next lesson. Ask your class, in particular some backward pupil, a few questions to begin with which they can not answer and they will soon feel that they know nothing and will have little inclination to make any further efforts at answering.

Hence do not overlook the easy questions in a lesson. Suppose the lesson is: "At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn; and His disciples," etc. One might start out, Whose name is first mentioned in the lesson? Where was He going? On what day? Who were with Him? What did they do? etc. Such questions start the wheels going; they beget interest and confidence on the part of the pupils. Sometimes, too, we are surprised that then cannot answer even these, and for that reason also they should not be omitted. By the way, too, almost every lesson will furnish a goodly number of such questions.

Furthermore, see that your questions are definite, that they will bring the answers you want. A ques-

tion may be so put as to be capable of being answered in two or a half dozen ways; it is not put right, it is like telling a child to look at a certain bird in a tree when there is a whole flock there all looking very much alike. You need, therefore, to formulate your questions carefully beforehand. Yet even with the most careful questions you will not always get the answer you want; sometimes it will be partly right, at other times altogether wrong. Accept what is right and with other questions lead the child to find the rest of the answer. Even if the answer is entirely wrong, yet often you can lead over from it to the correct answer. At all events do not cut the child off as though he knew nothing.

Finally, one of the most important things is that you prepare well, not only that you understand the lesson, but also that you know just what questions you will ask. And here it is generally best that you make out your own list of questions. You can be guided by those in the book or leaf, but make out your own list.

Many other things could yet be said on the subject, but we shall stop here.

## XIV. GUIDING STARS.



**B**EFORE the invention of the compass sailors in their course over the waters were guided by the stars and constellations. In a cloudy night they were therefore "at sea." In the day the sun, of course, served as a way-mark.

There is something like this in teaching the Bible. The Bible may not improperly be compared with the sea, and not a few, it appears, in trying to navigate it are lost; they have no sure way-marks to keep them in the right course. But how can that be? objects one. Surely if they teach the Bible they must be teaching the truth. It would seem so and should be so and really is so, if they actually teach the Bible and do not simply teach out of the Bible. The fact that a man has the Bible in his hand and, professing to teach the truth, uses Scriptural language, is not sufficient evidence that he is really teaching the Bible or God's Word. He may be tearing it to pieces, though thinking that he is teaching it correctly. There are some flowers which if you eat, they will poison you, but a bee gets honey out of them. The Bible in itself is, of course, by no means poisonous, but there are people, and sometimes even well-meaning people, who get poison out of it; they wrest the Scriptures unto their own destruction. 2 Peter 3, 16.



Now it is to warn you against any such rocks or breakers and, if possible, to point out some safe way-marks, that I have prepared this paper for you this evening. However good Sunday-school teachers you may be as to methods, yet if you should lead your classes into errors and misconceptions concerning the way of life, then you would prove yourselves to be something far worse than mere failures as teachers. Indeed, your very skill as teachers would prove the more ruinous to your classes. Think of a sea captain who, however skilled he may be in managing his vessel, has no compass, nor knows anything of any other way-mark—would you care to put to sea with him? I for one would fear that he might get lost on the boundless deep and, in spite of his skill, go down with all on board.

As to the way-marks, now, or guiding stars, we have, first, the Bible itself. In it we have God's revealed will. Whatever other guides we may follow, we must always come back to the Word of God to find out whether we are on the right way. It is the ship's compass, no matter whether the sun shines or it is star-light, or whether the heavens are black with clouds. When I said above that the Bible as such is not always a sure guide I said it of those who do not use it properly. But if one makes a diligent use of the Bible, approaches it humbly, and not with the purpose of reading his own notions into it, but to

fill himself with its truth, and in prayer relies upon the spirit of God to guide him into the truth, for that person the Bible is all the guide needed. That is my conviction; such confidence have I in the perspicuity of the Holy Scriptures and in the power and readiness of the Holy Spirit to guide the honest searcher. But mark you, aside from an honest, humble and God reliant heart, this requires a most diligent use of the Bible. And it is chiefly because men are lacking in one or the other of these conditions of correct and effective Bible study that they need so many other aids and guides to keep them off the rocks. Let me commend to you, therefore, a prayerful and most diligent study of the entire Bible; nothing else, let me assure you, can take its place.

Secondly, we have the confessions of our Church, in particular Luther's Small Catechism and the Augsburg Confession. In the realm of literature you will find no safer guides outside of the Bible. The catechism in addition is by means of questions and answers and Scripture passages explained at such length as to render the excuse that the nut is hard to crack altogether out of the question. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of the Augsburg Confession; to my knowledge we have no popular exposition of its articles in English. Yet again, we have another confession, viz., the Apology, which is both a defense and explanation of the Augsburg Confession. But

it, too, in the first place, as far as I know, is not issued in separate book form, and, in the second place, is perhaps more difficult of reading than the average Sunday-school teacher in the present age of light reading would care to lay hold of. But right here is the great fault: men are not willing to work hard enough at these confessions to get out of them what they have to offer. Remember that you can get nothing valuable without hard work; even your own salvation, although it is a free gift, yet you must work it out with "fear and trembling" and fight for it and run for it and even die for it. If the fight that many of us are making for salvation is in proportion to our earnest study of the Bible and our confessions, then surely we need not fear and tremble. Even the catechism after confirmation, when it was beginning to be understood, is laid aside and its specific teachings largely forgotten. These things must result in a "wavering course" in teaching. But if one, next to the Bible, cheerfully assumes the task of studying our confessions as found in the Book of Concord, there is no reason why he should not be a perfectly safe teacher.

Furthermore, besides the confessions, there are other writings that are calculated to serve as splendid guides. Such are "Justification" by Dr. Loy, "Church Members' Manual" by Dr. Schuette, "Means of Grace" by Rev. Cooperrider, "Distinctive Doctrines" by Dr. Graul, "His Footsteps" by Rev.

Lenski, "Way of Salvation in the Lutheran Church" by Dr. Gerberding, and I trust it will not be considered immodest to mention "The Holy Service" by the writer, and other books and tracts. These are all plain, direct and generally also popular expositions of certain great teachings of the Bible. Of course they do not read like stories or novels, they are not meant to be dreamed over while swinging in a hammock. One must buckle down to them as we do to any other real work. It is true that many religious books are unnecessarily "dry," but that is no reason why we should consign them to the dust, especially if they contain the very sap of life. We often have to eat dry bread, but we chew it a little longer and the stomach is pleased above measure. We often have dry spells of weather in summer, but we do not go to bed and sleep until the spell is over, but eat and drink and go about our business as usual. Apply the same principles to these books and you will be surprised at the help you will get for teaching.

Furthermore, we have the *Standard*, the official English weekly of our Synod. It is true that it has no Sunday-school department, but it is also true that very little appears in it which cannot be more or less directly utilized in our Sunday-school work. But what I have in mind in particular here is the fact that a careful reading of the *Standard* as it appears week after week will do much toward keeping a

teacher in the way of truth. Every week there are discussed certain important doctrines and duties that devolve upon us as members of a congregation or in our lives as individual Christians. It is impossible for one to err greatly if he faithfully follows this monitor. Every family should read the *Standard* and Sunday-school teachers should be the very last ones to do without it. I do not believe much in resolutions, but I do wish we had all the teachers in synod here this evening and I could move them to resolve, every one of them, to take and read the *Standard*.

We have also the "Teacher's Guide" and the "Primary Teacher" by the present writer. These are our teachers' specific helpers. Of course every teacher should have a copy and should make good use of it. And I beg you to note well the last point, for a good thing unused is practically good for nothing.\*

Finally, we have the teacher's meeting and every school in some way or other should do that work. Not only is thereby preparation made for the individual lessons in particular, but the pastor has a good opportunity also of leading his teachers more fully into the truth in general, of guiding them safely and of keeping them in one mind and purpose.

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\*The various Lutheran bodies in this country have, of course, their own specific helps for teachers, as also their own religious journals.

Taking all things together, we must conclude that our heaven contains quite a constellation of stars to guide the teacher in his way. But you must keep your eyes open.

## XV. TRUTH-CENTERS.



**I**N our last paper we spoke about guides for the teacher. None of us are so thoroughly acquainted with the country we are traversing as to be able to get along altogether without guides. New questions are constantly arising, new difficulties presenting themselves, and new enemies appearing upon the horizon, which compel us to look anew to our steps to see that they are sure, and that we do not fall into the ditch together with those whom we are leading, or get into difficulties from which we cannot extricate ourselves.

There is one guide yet, and indeed the most important of all, of which I did not speak in the preceding paper; I mean the guidance of the Holy Spirit procured in answer to prayer. The true teacher, however many other teachers he may have, must also be taught of God. We have no great artist except those who studied the masters; so also there is no true teacher of the things of God except him who went to school to the Holy Ghost. A man may know much about the Bible and he may know the catechism by heart, yet if he has not been "taught of God" (Isa. 54, 13), he can neither be a safe nor a successful teacher. In our Catechism we say, "I

believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, *enlightened* me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith." By the *enlightening* He causes us to see and know and understand the truth. He is called the "Spirit of Truth," and He was given to *guide* us into all truth, all the spiritual truth that we need to know for our salvation. You cannot, my friends, get along in your work without God's Spirit; He must be the constant light in your own hearts.

Two things, however, are necessary in order to get the Spirit. You cannot have Him for the mere asking, yet you cannot get Him unless you do ask. What I mean is that you must diligently pray God to give you His Spirit to guide you into the truth. That is the one thing. The other is that with the asking you must combine a diligent study of the Word of God. It is by means of this Word that He imparts himself. Combine these two, a diligent study of God's Word in the proper spirit and earnest believing prayer for the Holy Ghost, and you hold in your hand the key that unlocks the unspeakable treasures of the Bible. Noted human teachers, bulky volumes and renowned seminaries may not do it, but this will.

But I wish to speak to you this evening about truth-centers. Often when locating houses in a city we locate them with reference to some prominent



building; for example, Mr. A. lives two blocks east of the City Hall. We need to make use of a similar expedient in teaching. There are leading truths in the Bible, as there are prominent buildings in a city. We need to know which these truths are and where they are located, i. e., where the one is with reference to the other. If we have a correct and distinct map of this field of truth in our mind we shall not likely get lost. I never saw London, but if I knew all the prominent buildings in all parts of the city and just where they are located, I believe I could find my way in that immense hive of humanity without any great trouble.

A clear knowledge of these truth-centers will serve a twofold purpose: first, it will aid greatly in making your teaching clear; you will always know pretty certainly where you are and it will help you to attach the proper importance to the thing or truth you are speaking about. Secondly, it will serve as a guide, and that a most excellent one, for keeping you in the truth and leading your class in the right way. It is about this second advantage that I wish to speak in particular. I can, of course, only speak of a few of these truth-centers, and I shall speak of those that seem to me to be the most practical and important in your work.

One is that the *Bible is God's Word*. This is important at the present day when so many people no longer reverence the Bible as God's Word, but class it

with mere human writings such as Shakespeare's and others, and declare that we must determine by our reason, by science or history what in it is true or not true. Even quite young people, especially if they have had a little schooling, are bold to declare that they no longer believe in the Bible, or that the account of the creation or of the flood is only a myth. All questions now of this kind that may arise in your class you must be able to answer in the light of the fact that the whole Bible is God's Word to men.

Another such a truth-center is that *God rules in the world*. Here also you must be on the look-out for rationalism in your classes. You may not find any of your pupils rationalists, especially if they are members of the Lutheran Church, but they may have rationalistic ideas either coming from their own hearts or getting them from others. The world professes to know so much about herself, her make-up, and her running, that many seem to think that about everything that is and takes place can be explained without any reference to God. God is, so to say, ruled out of His own house. Everything takes place according to natural causes; the laws of nature do everything. When therefore any such questions arise in your work, you will need to answer them in the light of the fact that God is master in His house.

Another truth-center is that *man by nature is totally sinful*. There is quite a prevalent opinion among

many that man, aside from any work of grace in him, is not such a bad kind of being and quite complimentary to his Master. To speak of man as a worm of the dust, is, in the eyes of many, to slander most grossly the "noblest creature of God." Of course, where men have such high opinions of their natural and moral condition and ability, little need can be felt of a Savior. It is true that man was made only "a little lower than the angels," but so far as his natural, moral and spiritual condition is concerned he has utterly departed from God and is lost in sin. All such questions must therefore be settled in the light of the fact that man by nature is totally sinful and corrupt and that he must be born again before he can enter the kingdom of God.

Another truth-center is that *Christ is the one and only Savior of men*. We fear that there are many people who are expecting to be saved without Christ. It is a very widespread belief that if a man does as nearly right as he knows how, all will be well in the end, even if he does not believe in Christ, nor belong to Church. You will find this notion cropping out everywhere, and you must be prepared to meet it promptly. All such questions must be disposed of in the light of the fact that no man cometh to the Father but by Christ.

Another truth-center is that *salvation is a free gift, that it is by grace*. Even when Christ is recognized

as the only Savior, yet we find people who think that they must first make themselves good before Christ will accept them, or that even after they feel that they have been accepted they must still by their works or by holy life earn salvation. It is of course true that each one must work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, as Paul tells us, yet it is nevertheless a free gift. All such questions must therefore be answered in the light of this great fact.

Another great truth-center is that *this salvation becomes ours through faith*. This is meant to keep before us at all times the importance of faith. When we believe in Christ, i. e., put our trust in Him as our Savior, then and only then does He impart Himself to us together with all the gifts of salvation. But it needs to be made clear that faith is not simply to know something about Christ and hold it to be true, but a living reliance upon Him as one's Savior every day of one's life.

Another truth-center is that *Christianity is spiritual*. It is not enough to read the Bible every day, go to church on Sunday, conform to outward church rites and obligations and to meet outward Christian duties in our intercourse with one another, but that all these things must be of the heart also. No truth needs to be emphasized more at the present time probably than just this. All questions of life, therefore, questions of doing and living, must be disposed of in the light

of the fact that the Christian religion is spiritual. I include here the Christian's everyday life, that it must be spiritual, a living unto God and not unto the world or to his own sinful flesh.

These are probably the most important truth-centers, as I have chosen to call them. There are still others which each one can discover for himself. If you inform yourselves well on these great truths or doctrines and constantly keep them before you in your teaching, you will find it a great help, and it will do much towards keeping yourselves and your classes out of the ditch.

## XVI. TEACHING NOT ALL.



**T**HE Sunday-school teacher has other things to do besides teaching proper. You teach your scholars when you cause them to know some truth which they did not know before. This is important, for we believe that it is through a knowledge of God's Word that men are brought to Christ and are saved. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." However affable, congenial and attractive a cook may be, if she does not put something substantial on the table for us to eat, we will sever our connection and look out for better board. So, too, a teacher may be very congenial, interesting and all that, but if he does not teach anything, his scholars will surely not fill up with knowledge, grow robust in faith and be prepared to enter lustily upon the fight of life. Teaching, therefore, imparting truth, must always be the chief work of teachers. You are to be teachers, do not forget it.

On the other hand, there are other things for you to do and other ways of influencing the class, that dare by no means be neglected. Ignorance is not the only cause of unbelief in Christ or of wrong doing generally. Indeed, in a Christian land like our own, it

can hardly be said to be the chief cause. There is, of course, an astonishing amount of ignorance in things pertaining to God's Word and the way of life, in our land, notwithstanding its boasted enlightenment. Yet if all would do the will of God to the extent they know it, I am sure we should all think that a new age of the world had set in, we should think that the lion is about ready to lie down with the lamb.

Most of our sinning is done in the very face of our knowledge of the truth and the right. Ignorance is often made the scape-goat of wrong-doing that should be charged to our unwillingness to do the right. So, too, there is much complaint, on the part of men especially, against the Church and preachers that they do not preach a practical Gospel. Ah, but the Gospel we preach is practical enough, very practical, in fact, but they do not want to practice it. I wish simply by these statements to call your attention to the fact that it is possible for your class to know the truth and yet not do it. This, of course, should lead no one to say, Well, if imparting knowledge will not do the work any way, why go to all the trouble of teaching? And why should it be necessary for the teacher to know so much? Dr. Trumbull tells of an ignorant exhorter who said to a certain old divine: "God has no need of your book-larnin'"; to which the divine replied: "Neither has He any more need of your ignorance." Holding the truth does not in itself make one a child

of God, for it is possible to "hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1, 18), and the sin thereof is the greater, but this is sure, that without that truth there is no possibility of becoming such children. Food alone will not sustain the life of the body, but without food the body ordinarily must perish. What we want to seek is to have the class both know the truth and do the truth: "Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

Now, among these other things than teaching the teachers' influence upon the class is probably chief. I do not mean the influence which he exerts through the teaching, i. e., through the truth which he imparts, but his influence aside from that teaching or truth. Is there such an influence? you may ask. There certainly is. I believe it correct to say that a mother's wholesome influence upon her children is due not alone to her ability to teach the children, but also to certain other sources of power. Indeed the question may justly be raised whether it is not chiefly due to these other things. To be sure, greater knowledge and ability to teach should not at all stand in the way of her influence, although they sometimes do, especially the former, yet the mother's influence as such is something altogether different from the powers of her knowledge and teaching abilities.

You as teachers do, of course, not stand to your classes in the same relation as a mother or father does



to his children, yet there is a way of influencing them that is much like it. We say of this or that person that he or she has been like a father or mother to us; they have treated us and influenced us as a father or mother would. Let us be such fathers and mothers to our classes in addition to being their teachers. The more so, since we are actually taking their parents' place in teaching them.

Now, just what this influence is, in what it consists, or how it must be acquired, is hard to say. It is one of those things of which we know that it exists, but it is hard to get hold of and describe it so that others can see just what it is. It is much like the atmosphere; we live in it and breathe it, and enjoy it, but we cannot get hold of it and do not know what it is, for to say that it is composed of oxygen and nitrogen says very little except to experts. So the wholesome influence of a teacher is a kind of atmosphere in which it is good for the class to be. Even though the teaching is not up to the standard, still the class likes to be there and we feel that it is good for them to be there.

One thing, however, I am sure of, and that is that a person must possess certain natural gifts of mind and heart or disposition, otherwise he cannot hope to exert this benign influence to any great extent. Much of course can be done by training and culture, but not all. Some persons could probably never be made suc-

cessful teachers, no matter how much training they might get; so also these other powers cannot be acquired by all. A person may know as much as Socrates did and be as skillful in catechising as he was, and yet be as cross as a bear, as sour as vinegar, and as uncongenial as a block of ice. A mother may be a shining light in some literary club, but the place that should be the home, the dearest place on earth, may be a haunt of fear and terror where the child is boxed on the ears, the cat kicked through the door, and where even the hens cackle for joy that they do not need to live in the house with her. This may be an extreme case, yet, perhaps, not so very rare. And in such cases, too, it is evident that little attempt has been made to mollify or drive out the evil spirit. The roughest stone can be ground smooth, so too the most uncongenial disposition could be much improved, and in the Christian, whether mother, father, or teacher, we expect to find it much improved.

Furthermore, we know that a teacher who would exert this wholesome influence upon his class must love his class, and not only the class as such, but every one in the class. Without love your teaching and all your work will lack warmth and personal interest in your pupils. They will also soon feel this and they will be as cold toward you as you are icy toward them.

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There must also be kindness. You are teaching the Gospel of kindness as well as the Gospel of love. Practice toward your class the kindness of the Gospel. Study closely Jesus' manner; kindness marked all His dealings. Even when He severely corrected the wicked it was done in a kindly spirit and, I am sure, too, with a kindly voice.

There must be gentleness also. Rough, coarse, rude manners, whether in speech or action, will shut out any wholesome influence; even the truth you teach will lose much of its power and attractiveness. Remember that Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world," not simply My word, but ye, ye filled with My word and truth. However bright a light you may have, if you put a dark glass about it, it will make a very dim light for others.

You need to be reverent also. You are dealing with holy things, with the Word of God and with immortal souls. Set your class an example of treating the Word of God with holy respect and with reverence, and of dealing seriously with questions about salvation.

You need to show, too, that you are very much interested in the good of your class. If they are made to feel by your work that you are not interested in them, then of course they will have little interest in you, and just as little in the lesson and in their own salvation perhaps.

The above seem to me to be the chief things necessary in order that one may exert a wholesome influence upon the class. And I am sure that if one carries out these principles he may expect to meet with considerable success in his teaching.

There are still other things a teacher must attend to; I can only mention a few of them. Visiting the scholars at their homes is an important thing, though, I fear, very little practiced. Visiting any sick scholars and ministering to their wants is likewise essential. Going after absentees, not only once or twice, but often, is another incumbent duty. Becoming acquainted and consulting with the parents of scholars should by no means be neglected.

Last but not least a teacher should never forget to pray for his class as well as for himself. The subject of prayer in relation to the Sunday-school teacher deserves to be treated in a chapter by itself, it is so important. Yet the practice of prayer being such an evident duty for the Christian, it should not be necessary to dwell much upon the subject; every one, and in particular Sunday-school teachers, should be much given to prayer. Luther says that only praying Christians are real Christians. I think we can say the same with reference to Sunday-school teachers; only praying teachers are real teachers. The work you are doing as teacher is not a mere human work, but divine in its nature. That is, you are imparting divine truth

and opening the way for the Spirit of God to enter the heart and dwell and work there. Since you are thus such an intimate co-worker with God the most natural inference is that you should want to confer much with your divine partner as to how the work can best be done. Partners in business confer much with one another. Do so in your business as teacher. Pray in behalf of yourself that you may be a true teacher; pray in behalf of the class that they may receive the grace of God and grow therein.

## XVII. WELL-TAUGHT RATHER THAN MUCH-TAUGHT.



**I**N a previous paper I spoke to you about Truth-Centers. They are the great truths which we must always keep in view in our teaching. Rather, to make that stronger, let me say that they are the truths which we must keep teaching all the time. Other things come in but these great truths must always be there. In our eating there are a great many knick-knacks which we may have or not have. Generally we are better off without them. But there are certain staples without which we cannot well get along; the meal is not satisfactory, if they are not on the table. So there are great divine truths which make up the very meat of the soul; and in a Lutheran Sunday-school at least, no lesson is satisfactory where one or more of these slices of bread, well buttered, are not handed out to the class.

These thoughts lead me this evening to speak of a matter which pertains to method in teaching, which I fear has not been emphasized sufficiently as yet. It is this, our aim must be to teach a little well rather than to teach much poorly. I frequently hear complaints about our Public Schools that in aiming to cover so much ground in their course they fail to

teach thoroughly the few things that are absolutely necessary to an education which the ordinary citizen needs. Graduates can perhaps say a few words in Latin or in French; they perhaps know a little Civics or a few terms in Political Economy; they can, it may be, smear on a few colors which some people might mistake for a painting, and there may be still other things of which they have a smattering; but when it comes to intelligent reading, legible writing, correct spelling, or when asked to compute how many yards of paper will be required to cover a room with a few unusual angles in it, they are not "on the job." Such an education is a farce. What the boy or girl needs to know he does not, at least not thoroughly; and what he does know he either does not know or else he has no use for it.

Let us avoid that mistake in our Sunday-school work. Knowledge is like food, it does not do any one any good unless it is assimilated. If you put too much food in your stomach, that organ refuses to do its work; or rather, it is unable to do the work imposed upon it; the result is that you become sick and the food you have eaten is worse than wasted, for the body gets little or no nourishment out of it. So too, if you give your class too many truths in one lesson, their minds, especially if they are quite young, will not be able to assimilate it all and the result may be that very little of the knowledge will stick. The ef-

fect will be still worse, if what you give them is not "well done"; they will retain still less and your half hour's teaching will have been done in vain. Do not offer them too much therefore, but make it definite, distinct, clear so that all can see it and that they may keep it and take it home with them.

This applies furthermore not only in general, but also to each separate lesson. What I mean is that almost every ordinary lesson if everything is dug out, really contains more matter than the average class can take in at one sitting. In the very preparation of your lesson therefore, aim only at getting out about as much as you think the class can handle. No matter how much other matter may be there, or how interesting and helpful it might be, pass it by until some other time. Prepare well the needed amount, be sure that you yourself see it clearly, then present the truths to the class in a way that they also will see it and remember it. Some teachers seem to think that it is absolutely necessary for them in every case to get over the entire lesson, that is, touch—and often it is no more than a touch—upon every individual thought and idea contained in the lesson. That is not necessary to good teaching. In some lessons it can be done and should be done. To do so in others might defeat the very object of the lesson. Teaching a lesson is not like walking five miles to town; you must cover every foot of the distance, otherwise you will



not reach your destination. You do not so need to cover every idea in the lesson in order to reach your goal. Here it may be that the more space you cover the farther you get away from the end of your journey.

It may be too that the amount to be taught depends, not so much upon what your class can assimilate, as upon what you yourself can master. Let your aim be to teach well what you teach, even if it be less than the class has a right to expect. For remember that it is only what the child actually gets and takes home that is of any real worth to it.

When you have now determined upon what in your lesson is best for the class and upon the proper amount and when you have made yourself thoroughly familiar with it so that it is clear in your own mind, then seek to make it clear also to the mind of the class. In doing this I want to call your attention to a thing which perhaps has not been emphasized very much in any of the preceding papers. It is this that you have the class look at the truth on all sides, see it from different angles. Notice what a man does, for example, if he examines an apple. He takes it up in his hand and turns it about from side to side to see what its color is all around; he looks at the stem end and then at the blossom end; he weighs it in his hand, presses it with his thumb to determine its texture; he smells of it and if permitted, he bites into it to get

its taste and flavor. What is his purpose in all this? He wants to know the apple and when he is through with his examination he does know it. If he has a fairly reliable memory, he can tell his neighbor in six months or in a year just what kind of an apple such and such a species is.

So too you need to show the apple of the lesson to your class. Let them see the truth from many angles. Every view, if it be clear cut, will be as it were a driven nail helping to fasten the picture upon the mind. Suppose the lesson is on obedience. Make plain what obedience is to begin with, that it means actually to do what has been commanded. Show in what spirit it must be done, cheerfully, willingly, and if it is not done cheerfully and willingly, it is not obedience at all in the proper sense. Show that it must be done from love and not from fear. Show that what is commanded, for example by parents, is commanded not only by man but also by God. Therefore too when obedience is rendered it is obedience not only to man but also to God. Show the peace of conscience that follows upon an act of true obedience and the distress of conscience which results from an act of disobedience.

All these are so many truths connected with obedience, so many marks or qualities that belong to the apple; and no one has a clear conception of what

obedience means, until he sees clearly these different factors.

Suppose now that you have succeeded in making clear to your class how all these things belong to obedience. You might make it still clearer by showing how numbers are made up of certain factors. For example, the number eight requires the factor 2 three times; or if you want to work by addition you need four 2's. You can by no manner or means get eight by adding three 2's together. So too you can never get true obedience by adding only two or three of the above marks together; you must have them all.

Suppose now that you have succeeded in making these things clear to your class, then you have taught your lesson and you have taught it well. It does not seem to be so very much what you have taught them, only what obedience is. But after all it is a great lesson that has been taught, one of the best that can be taught. Your class will be far more profited by going home with a clear notion of what obedience is than if they had many ideas, but very confused, not only on obedience but also on a number of other subjects. Do not aim to teach too much, but teach it well. That's the thought.

What has now been said about a single lesson applies also to an entire series of lessons. Suppose you have a year's study on Old Testament history or on what we usually call Biblical Narratives. Do not

think that everything which is contained in those narratives must be drilled into your class in one year. It is entirely too much for the average Sunday-school class. Those lessons were not meant to be exhausted in one year. They were intended to be repeated for a number of years. On the contrary, take the one or two facts or truths which you select from each lesson and aim to make them a permanent part of your class's knowledge at the end of the year. That's real teaching, not fumbling over a great mass of matter, but having nothing clear and positive at the end.

Here too is one reason why we prefer to use books in our Sunday-schools to lesson leaves, especially in the lower classes. In the lesson leaf system there is a different lesson for each Sunday and a different series of lessons for each year. The child keeps going and going, but does not seem to get anywhere; that is, it has traveled far and wide but knows very little of what it has seen and heard. With the graded book system the same journey is made year after year just as often as we deem it necessary. The result is that, if the work has been done thoroughly, the child, although it has not traveled over the whole world of the Bible, has become quite familiar with its chief countries.

These methods are especially necessary in the primary classes. Their minds are entirely too weak yet to take in a great amount of new matter each

Sunday. One or two simple truths or facts from each lesson and these often repeated, that is what the little child needs. Or what would be still better. Do not aim to give them a new lesson each Sunday. Make a selection for the year, fifteen or twenty would be enough. Teach these thoroughly, that is, so far as the little mind can grasp them. For the second year review these and add to them as many new lessons as seem necessary. Keep on in that way year after year until the entire field has been covered. That will be little well taught rather than much poorly taught. No, I want to modify that. It will be little well taught to begin with, but in the end it will also be much well taught.

The lesson then which I want you to take home with you this evening is this: Aim to teach only as much as you and your class can handle. Do this not only with the individual lesson, but do it also in the entire year's work. Do not worry about the matter which you cannot reach. It will keep till another year. If only your class will keep as well what it gets during the year.

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