

## The Sunday-School Teacher— His Responsibility and His Preparation.

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(Concluded.)

"Go preach the Gospel." The Gospel is made up of facts, commands and promises. A belief of these facts is necessary to intelligent obedience to the commands. Would you ask at what age can a child be taught to believe the facts of the Gospel? I answer, as soon as he can be made to comprehend his own being and the existence of a Supreme Being who gave him life.

There is a most absurd notion in the minds of some parents on this point. They say: "We will let the child alone till it gets old enough to choose for itself." What nonsense! Suppose you should withhold the life-giving milk from the tender babe until it grows sufficiently strong to feed itself!

We assume that the church must own and control the Sunday-school. This being true, a teacher must understand that he is working for the glory of God and the upbuilding of the church. Oh, that the teacher would realize this! The work of the Sunday-school removes largely the children from the instruction of the elders and preacher. The faithful preacher comes Lord's day after Lord's day before the people with the burden of souls upon him. The teacher has simply volunteered from the ranks of believers, to lighten the preacher's burden; in fact, it is a grand coöperative institution, in which every teacher assumes his share of the labor, and fills with more or less acceptance his position as a Gospel teacher.

In the third place, every teacher in the Sunday-school is responsible to each parent who entrusts his children to their care, for the lessons taught. The divine injunction to parents, "Nurture your children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord," must reach farther than the home training, if, in any manner, you commit your children to the care of a Sunday-school teacher. We here have the grand trinity of obligation resting upon the teacher; he is responsible to his fellow-men, the church, and to God, for the formation of those characters entrusted to him.

Teacher, when you assumed your present work in the Sunday school, you took a place far up in the duties that God has enjoined upon

his children. Let no one, then, shrink from the responsibility, who has undertaken the teaching and training of the little ones; but let us remember with gratitude, that, in accepting this work, we are building the spiritual house for an eternal habitation. If this be a responsibility—and it is a great one—how ennobling the duty conferred.

That was a startling question once asked by a poor, ill-clad little child as she wandered into a Sunday-school, "Is this the way to heaven?" It set the Superintendent thinking—"Is my school really the way to heaven? am I making it such?" This ought to be the question in every teacher's mind as week after week he meets his class: "Am I teaching the way to heaven?" The truly earnest teacher, the one whose heart is made tender and strong by this weekly contact with immortal souls; one whose whole being is merged into that loving watchfulness that constitutes a true leader; one whose comfort by day and whose song in the night is in the reflection of duty performed, may well consider this among the highest trusts conferred upon man or woman. Such an one can sing, each Lord's day evening, as the shadows lengthen and grow dim, as the sable curtains of night come gently down, as the last echo of merry voices grows quiet, and the little form vanishes from the teacher's sight,

"One more day's work for Jesus  
How sweet the work has been!"

But some dear, patient sister may have come from her class, a class of noisy, mischievous boys, whose heads cannot remain in place, whose feet cannot be kept still; and when she passes her noisy, turbulent class before her in mental review, she may sing, with weary heart and aching head,

"One more day's work for Jesus  
Alas! A weary day!"

But be glad, faithful, patient teacher. The parents may not yet have learned your true worth; they may not yet know that the Sunday-school, outside the sacred precincts of home and the shadow of the family altar, is the grandest place on earth for their children's souls, but you know it, and by faithful work you may gather, little by little, the influences that defeat the grave and people heaven. Here, day by day, you are gathering the spiritual seed-corn of the world, and will one day present the rich

fruits of such a harvest as the angels of God will shout with joy, to behold. The faithful Christian teacher, who has prepared his class for eternal joy, will stand, one day, by the crystal waters of life, and hear the song of triumph by those very children who came each Lord's day into his class, heard and learned, were convinced, and fell in love with Jesus.

But before a teacher can prepare his class for the reception of the truth, he must himself be prepared. Manifestly, the first prerequisite to teaching is the possession of knowledge.

Unless a teacher knows something that his class does not, he cannot teach them. There can be, however, no definite rule laid down for a teacher's preparation. It is an old saying, that the teacher must know his lesson, and then know how to make his class know it; but the ever-difficult question is how to make the class possessors of the teacher's knowledge of the lesson. The teacher's preparation may be noticed under three heads: First, the preparation of the heart; second, of the mind; and third, of the class.

The teacher who recognizes his responsibility will rest not till his heart is prepared for the work of teaching, and that person who does not often fit the heart by earnest prayer for the class room, scarcely feels the burden resting upon him as a teacher. Not only must a teacher pray in secret, but his class should hear him pray. When the appeal is made directly, and when each member of the class can feel and know that the heart-felt words of the petition are for them, it has a mighty influence in subduing their feelings, and rendering their minds susceptible to the tender influence, of the lesson.

In the second place, the mind must receive due preparation. That teacher who rises before his class in the school and says: "Well, children," or, "Ladies and gentlemen, I am not prepared to-day," is not fit to teach that class, and should that occur frequently, he ought to resign. This preparation will, again, be largely governed by the responsibility that the teacher feels for his work. I need offer no rule for lesson study, as that has been amply discussed before this Convention, but I will suggest this hint: While the teacher, whom we assume, of course, is a Christian, needs a certain daily contact with God's Word,

in order to grow in grace and the knowledge of the truth, let him first discover the hidden pearls in the Sunday-school lesson. There are many ways to teach, but there is no more successful way than the central truth method. Be sure that you have the Golden Text of the lesson, the central truth; enforce that much. Do not be in a hurry to display your historical lore, nor dive too deeply into the descriptive till you have clinched the one important item of the lesson. Have a central figure, a key-stone in your lesson arch, a corner rock in your building, a thread of gold in your fabric, a rich kernel in every nut you crack for your class. Never be afraid of helps; use everything you can find to elucidate your lesson and fasten its points upon your mind; but never under any consideration allow yourself to assume that lazy, flimsy habit of bringing your helps before your class. I mean by that the regular note of questions and answers, the outlines of which any ordinary teacher can commit in an hour. This is not preparation. The class will soon learn that you are limping before them, and sooner or later the Sunday-school will lose that class, or that class will get a new teacher. As Bro. Moses E. Lard so beautifully expressed the idea to young preachers I would say to teachers: "Think, teachers, think of your lesson; think of it till your head aches and your heart is clear; think till you cannot make a blunder; think till every point is transparent, luminous; think till your mind bounds over it and plays about it with the ease of the gamboling fawn."

And lastly I would say, the class must be prepared. We may truthfully and proudly say of the Sunday-school class, it is the Archimedial lever of the world to-day, by which the oncoming generations shall be lifted up into the everlasting sunlight of God's love; the twin engine with the assembled church to bring us off from every sunken reef and rocky bar of this eventful life, and land us at last in the port of peace. This grand engine is Christ's Gospel. It may cost something to get it into the hearts of your class; but it will pay your care and toil. It will be sufficient for every contingency. Think of the mighty force of the Sunday-school class. "Xerxes with the hosts of Persia at his command, Alexander on his Eastern