

What To Teach and How To Teach It.

[Address of E. B. Ware, delivered before the Napa county Union Sunday school convention Oct. 9, 1879, and published by request.]

The importance of these questions, in connection with the Sunday school work will, I presume commend itself to the thoughtful mind of every Sunday school teacher. The benefit of the school to the church and the world depends largely upon what is taught in it, and its success as an auxiliary to the church in the salvation of souls, depends largely upon the competency of those to whom is entrusted the responsible position of teachers. In order to know what to teach, it is important to know what is the object of the teaching in the Bible school. Every effect must have its adequate cause, and every adequate cause will have its corresponding effect—therefore in determining, what to teach it becomes necessary to inquire what is the grand object of the Sunday school work. There must be an object constantly before the mind of the teacher, in order to determine the character of the teaching and the best method of its application. The machinist who constructs a machine has constantly before his mind the work that the machine is to perform. If it is an engine to run on a railroad and draw a train of cars, he constructs it with that end in view; every wheel is adjusted and every shaft is turned with reference to the work that the machine is to accomplish. If a father desires his son educated in the law, the faithful teacher will keep constantly before his mind the object of the son's education, and will try to store his mind with that knowledge that will be most beneficial to him in his chosen profession.

The captain who starts his vessel from San Francisco to Portland, Oregon, with a cargo and passengers on board, has one grand object before his mind, and that is, to land the vessel and passengers safely in the port of their destination; and every sail unfurled to the breeze, every signal given, and every turn of the helm are made with reference to this one great end. So in the Sunday school there is one grand object in view, one point to be gained, and must never be lost sight of, or all may be lost; and that is the salvation of the child, the winning of the soul to Christ—the fitting and the preparing of the child for the presence of God, and the company of angels. This is the grand object that should be constantly in the mind of the faithful teacher. Now what ever is best calculated to accomplish this work, to reach this end, is the thing to be taught.

We read that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to suffer and to die, that whosoever believed in him might not perish but have everlasting life. Here we have the ground of our future hope clearly stated. It is the love of God as manifested in the death of his son, or in other words, the Gospel. Hence the very first thing to be taught in the Bible school is the Gospel as God's power to save. From the young folk's Bible class down to the buds of promise, and especially before them the "old" story of Jesus and his love. We must see the A. B. C. card, the story book, with scenes from the hands of the teacher. These things ought not to be neglected. What we call the sabbath school, Dr. Vincent, is, strictly speaking, the Bible school; and the Bible should be the only text book in the Alpha and the Omega classes taught therein. But in the Bible the teacher should endeavor to teach the whole of it, its precepts, ordinances as well as its promises.

We may teach the children the negative duties of the decalogue but this does not lead against the shafts of no evil. If we would shape our teaching so that religion would be more than

a cold morality, that it is a divine and an energizing power in the heart and soul of man destroying the love of sin, and creating him anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. If we would love our children, we must teach them that they are in need of a Savior, that they must be converted, that they must become members of the church of the living God.

In the second place we should teach practical religion in the Sunday school. "What!" says an individual, "teach children the practical duties of the Christian life?" Most certainly. It should never be forgotten that the Bible school is, in one sense, a training school. We are fitting and preparing the children for the trials and conflicts of the Christian life. We must teach them, then, to run with patience the race before them, to fight the good fight of faith, to be valiant soldiers of the cross. To be forewarned, it is said, is to be forearmed. By teaching the children practical religion, the duties and obligations of the Christian life, we thus forewarn and forearm them against the evil day.

Children should be taught to pray for the church, to work for the church and to contribute of their means to the support of the church. Thus taught, when they are translated from the Sunday school to the church, they will begin at once to bear fruit to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

"Teach them," says the blessed Savior, "To observe all things whatsoever I have said unto you and lo! I am with you always even unto the end of the world." "All Scripture," says an apostle, "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." So then we see that the Holy Scriptures contain all things necessary to fit and qualify us for every good word and work in the kingdom of God. Therefore they should be taught to the exclusion of everything else in the Bible school.

I close this department of my subject with the following conclusion, that the primary object of the Sunday school teaching being the winning of souls to Christ, and the training of children to a life of usefulness in the church; and that the Bible in its truths, its facts, its commandments, its promises, and its threatenings being the means ordained of God, by which this result is to be obtained; therefore, the Bible, and the Bible alone, should be constantly taught in the Bible school, to the exclusion of everything else.

We next notice, "How to teach the Bible."

We notice first. There must be preparation. There can be no success without it. A teacher that would make it a practice in our common schools or colleges, to appear before his class unprepared to teach them, would soon be dismissed, and a Sunday school teacher who does not feel an interest in the work sufficient to make preparation for it, should give place to those who do. There should be preparation of heart, (and I would say just here that I would have no teacher in the Sunday school who is not a professed Christian if I could avoid it). This heart preparation can only be had by earnest prayer and supplication to God. Go to God in secret and ask the aid of his divine spirit in understanding the lesson and in impressing it upon the minds and hearts of the children; and he has promised that he will reward you openly. There must also be a preparation of mind; this can only be accomplished by reading and hard study; commence early in the week, read over the lesson for the following Lord's day, become thoroughly acquainted with the facts of the lesson, read parallel passages, think about it,

ask yourself questions about it, get fixed ideas of your own in reference to it, then, if you have time, consult commentaries and other helps.

In teaching the Bible we should never forget its divine origin. That God is its author, that it is God speaking to man. Again, we should never forget the central thought, running through the entire volume, and that is the redemption of man. The Bible is too often looked upon as a kind of a religious scrap book, filled with moral and religious sentiments, placed there especially as texts for sermons; hence many read it and try to study and teach it without any reference to its unity and harmony.

The committee of the International Series of Sunday School Lessons has furnished for seven years a most happy selection of lessons, in which this unit line of the Bible is clearly seen in every lesson, commencing with the creation and fall of man, and ending, after a study of seven years with his complete restoration. But it must be remembered that the Bible, while it is a harmonious whole, has also its parts, its divisions, and its sub-divisions. Our national constitution forms one grand system of government for the entire people of the United States. But that system is divided into states, territories, cities, counties, and townships, all forming one harmonious system of government. Likewise, the Bible is one book; it has one origin, yet it has its many divisions, its several parts, its special and its general laws, and he who would study and teach the Bible as a whole, must study and teach it in reference to its parts. The Bible is made up of 66 different books, written by 38 different persons, living at different periods in the world's history, covering altogether more than 1,500 years.

Again, the history of the Bible embraces three dispensations of God's dealings with man. The Patriarchal, from Adam to Moses; the Mosaic, from Moses to Christ; the Christian, from Christ to the present. He or she who teaches the Bible wisely, will teach in reference to these dispensations.

Again, there are the proper divisions of the word of truth, which must not be forgotten in teaching. Paul says to Timothy, "Study, to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

I here suggest a few questions which should enter into the investigation of every lesson:

1. Where is the lesson found? Is it in the Old Testament or the New? Is it in the law, the prophets, or the Psalms? Is it in the Gospels, the Acts, the letters to Christians, or the Revelations? By these questions we make the child familiar with the proper division of the word of God.

Again, Who wrote this lesson? To whom was it written? To Jews or Gentiles? To Jews or Christians? To believers or unbelievers? Under what dispensation did the writer live, and those to whom he wrote? What were the circumstances under which he wrote? What was the chief design of the writing? These, and many kindred questions, the importance of which will be seen at once, are necessary to a proper understanding of the Word, and often shed much light on the lesson under consideration. Geography, chronology, and history, are three important things to be taught in the teachings of the Bible. There can be no successful teaching without them. If we would plant a faith in the hearts of the children, which will stand the storms and the tempests of modern infidelity, we must do so by teaching them the facts of the Bible, by filling their minds with its history, its chronology, its geography, and the biography of its leading characters; then, when a blatant infidel, like Bob Ingersall,

gets up to talk about the "mistakes of Moses," there will be children, as there are now, all over the land, who can point out the glaring mistakes of the speaker, and gross misrepresentations of Bible history and Bible facts.

I conclude with a few suggestions in reference to how to teach the lesson. Many teachers seem to have no method or system at all in teaching. They pursue a kind of a haphazard course, teaching whatever happens to suggest itself to their minds at the time. This is most destructive of all progress in Scripture knowledge and of the welfare of the pupil. One great mistake in teaching, often, is in the attempt of the teacher to teach too much. We often spend too much time about the "mint, anise and cummin," and omit the weightier matters of the law. I knew a teacher to spend a whole hour with his class discussing the question, Where did Cain get his wife? I heard of another teacher who spent an hour with his class trying to prove that the Ethiopian Eunuch was a Jew. Foolish and unlearned questions, says Paul, avoid, knowing that they do gender strife. The teacher should try to get at the central thought of the lesson; and everything else that is in the lesson should, as far as possible, be arranged to illustrate and impress upon the mind of the class that central thought. Christ, the great teacher, is our example in teaching, as in everything else, and his manner and method of teaching should be the constant study of the faithful Sunday school teacher. There is seldom more than one point to be illustrated and enforced by any one of his most beautiful parables. His words were such as a child could understand, and the point of the discourse was generally readily understood by all. The first thing in teaching a class, is to interest it. The second is to impress it with the lesson. In order to do this there are two things to be remembered; first, that children are more fleshly than spiritual, and secondly that their minds are not strong; hence the importance of knowing the capacity of each member of the class, and of arranging the lesson to meet the capacity of all. But to interest others we must be interested ourselves; to impress others we must be impressed. No teacher or preacher ever succeeded in interesting others in that in which he himself was not interested. But in order to awaken this interest and make the desired impression, it is necessary for the teacher to come in sympathy with his class, he must humble himself and become as a little child in the humbleness of his heart and disposition, if he would gain their affections and fill their hearts with the love of the truth. It was the human sympathy manifested in the life of the Savior that drew the multitudes after him and caused them to listen with bated breath to the words that fell from his pure lips.

It is the manifestation of human sympathy in the death and sufferings of Christ that binds the human heart to him to-day.

It is said of a missionary sent to labor among the slaves of a foreign country, that he spent years of toil and faithful labor without witnessing a single conversion, he could arouse no interest in the hearts of those for whom he labored. Discouraged and heart broken he knew not what to do to awaken their interest and enlist their sympathies. After long meditation and prayer he resolved what to do, he went to the chief of the tribe, and offered himself as a slave to labor and toil as they labored and toiled, he assumed the name of a slave, he was driven to field with them, was quartered with them at night, shared their sufferings and hardships, and in this way he gained their confidence and their sympathy, and thereby opened up the way for the favorable relation of the story of "Jesus and his

love," the result of which was the conversion of thousands to the religion of Jesus.

In this touching incident we have a forcible illustration of the principle of all successful teaching in our efforts to win souls to Christ.

Finally, my faithful teachers and fellow workers in the grand army of the Lord, let us not grow weary in this the grandest and noblest work of life, but let us ever remember that the promise is that in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. And O, the brightness of that teacher's crown and the fulness that teacher's reward, if, at the end of the race, when we all stand in the presence of God and his Lamb, when the loved ones of our class on earth are gathered around us, we can look on the face of the blessed Savior, and say, here Lord, are all those that thou didst give us on earth, and none of them is lost.

What Might Be.

The difference between what is and what might be, and ought to be is great. I refer now to the moral condition of the Church and the world. Begin at home with myself, and my own church. I might be a much better man and minister than I am. I am painfully conscious of many respects in which I might be so. I might be more Christ-like and holy; I might be more godly in my walk and conversation; I might be a man of more faith, and so of more power with God in prayer; I might be more faithful in all duties; I might prepare better sermons, and preach them better. Indeed, there is no respect in which I might not be better than I am.

And as regards the members of my church, they might all be better than they are. The best of them are not as good as they might be, and ought to be. And the greater part of them fall far below the standard to which they might attain. There is too much occasion for it to be asked of them: "What do ye more than others?" They attempt less for Christ, and do less for him, than they should. They are not as self-denying and as benevolent as becomes the disciples of Him who, though he was rich, yet for their sakes became poor, that they through his poverty might be rich. Their prayers are hindered by their coldness, their unbelief, and their improprieties. In short, the standard of piety in the church might, and ought to be, far higher than it is.

And now we suppose that it were indeed so, both as regards pastor and church. Suppose that we were all what we might be. What a power, then, should we be in all this community? How great for good would be our influence upon the impenitent around us? How would the mouths of gainsayers be stopped, and how would infidelity be put to flight, and how would iniquity blush and hide its head? How prevalent, then, would be our prayers, and how would the Gospel be preached in demonstration of the Spirit? What numbers would be converted to Christ, and how would his kingdom be advanced among us? And what an influence would go forth from among us, even to the ends of the earth?—N. Y. Observer.

—Nineveh was fourteen miles long, eight miles wide, and forty-six miles around, with a wall one hundred feet high, and thick enough for three chariots abreast.

"We don't know every thing," remarked a professor, "and we don't find many that claim to, except, now and then, one or two in the sophomore class."

"Our Savior spoke seven times from the cross on which he hung seven hours, and after his resurrection appeared seven times."

"In the Lord's prayer are seven petitions containing seven times seven words. In the Revelations we read of seven churches, seven candlesticks, seven trumpets, seven plagues, seven vials, seven angels, and seven-headed monsters."