

A GREAT WORK AND HOW TO DO IT

H.C. LEE

**CHRISTADELPHIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION
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This little booklet was printed and distributed to interested Sunday School teachers following an address to the Adelaide Sunday School staff by Bro. H.C. Lee many years ago.

I have not been able to ascertain the exact date, but it would have been at least 40 years and possibly longer.

Brother Lee has since passed into his rest and awaits the resurrection. His words were reprinted by the Enfield ecclesia in 1968 and as stocks of that issue are now exhausted, we have reset the work for a new generation of teachers.

The only variation is that we have added sub-headings to more easily define the sections of the address.

I am sure that all teachers can benefit from the words of a Brother who during his life in the Truth dedicated his time to the furtherance of the Gospel, particularly in the field of teaching and music.

Bro Arthur Edgecombe was pleased to add this work to the materials of the association in 1984 and it has been widely distributed since with constant demand.

We publish another edition with the hope that more will embrace the importance of this work as we prepare a people for the Lord.

Graham Travers
May 1993

An address delivered by Brother H.C. Lee to the Teaching staff of the Adelaide Christadelphian Sunday School.

Dear Fellow-Teachers,

The Sunday School has dispersed. For one brief hour they had spared no effort to impart the knowledge of a scripture lesson. With the departure of the scholars came the spirit of reverie. Once again, in thought, the class of young impressionable minds, was listening as Sunday after Sunday they had so often done before. In the searching light of self-examination, the teacher asks, "But have I in every way made that lesson plain and easily understood? Have I, in spite of all my words, failed to inspire my scholars with the truths I myself realise?"

Probably there are some engaged in the practical work of Sunday School who may have felt such misgivings. If this be so they may appreciate the opportunity of hearing an address intended to be a practical aid to the attainment of the ideal in Sunday School teaching. In this we have been helped by articles written by members of our brotherhood and others, and also by practical experience in class work for some years. Quotations from these writers' works are given as they are considered to be inspiring.

We shall consider the many aspects of Sunday School work in appropriate sections. The first concerns the value of the work.

The value of the work

It would be difficult to think of a practical teacher who failed to realise the extent of that value; still, it is quite possible that our realisation could be greater. There is, we believe, no other work in the truth that can give the keen satisfaction of manifest results for the labour given. These results are of the greatest importance to the welfare of the Ecclesia.

The child of today, who is being taught and moulded on lines that bring recognition and appreciation of the Truth, becomes the ecclesial member of tomorrow. He will there reflect his early training in the Sunday School. Thus it may be said that some teacher of the past speaks today through the active member of the ecclesia. And if credit can be traced to the faithful teaching should we not also apportion blame for faulty teaching, where results indicate a scanty knowledge and apathetic spirit? Many a man or woman carries for all time, the spirit that first came to life in a Sunday School class, listening to sincere and earnest teachers - their work lives on.

There is value to the child in that a knowledge and appreciation of righteous

principles will direct the conduct and hold him separate, to some extent, from the gross evil and materialism now so evident. They are saved from that blighting of body and mind, and by obedience to the truths taught from the scriptures, become members of that number who finally receive eternal life from Christ. If we can realise that the ultimate end of our work and influence may extend to an almost unrealisable magnitude, then we will fully appreciate the responsibility placed upon us. There is a glorious possibility in our work, for some children who have received our tuition most probably will in the Coming Age, be teachers and leaders of men - "*Kings and priests who will reign on the earth*". But while they are in your class they are still in the making.

The object of our teaching efforts

We would next consider the object of our teaching efforts - What is our motive? What is it we intend to do? Aimlessness in any project never achieves success, and this is most evident in teaching. A definite aim is essential. You may not achieve your object at once, but you are sure to come near, and finally reach the goal. The following is from a brother's article of 18 years ago, and is a fitting expression of what our aim should be:

"The object of all true education, and especially that of a Sunday School, is that the child may not merely know, but do and be. Cramming the child's mind full of Biblical history, geography, biography, and even doctrine will not ensure his final acceptance by the Lord Jesus at his coming. Rather so train him that he may learn to love the high ideals set before him in the Word of God, that, as he grows in years, there may be developed within him a realisation of the "*Beauty of holiness*," the love of God, a faith strong and intelligent, a hope living and real."

To be inspired by such a motive as this is to lead your class to the highest and best, and you will certainly be successful. It will be understood, therefore, that the teacher should be qualified for the task. There is an idea with some, that only those who are naturally gifted with an appealing way with children become successful teachers. This is partly true. Such gifted ones step over many difficulties, that others not so gifted must overcome. But more than appeal is required to impart the knowledge of the scriptures. The most important essentials are the qualifications required in our personal character. So the qualities we would place in first order are - Sincerity and Earnestness.

It is those who sincerely know and love the Truth who are the best fitted to impart the spirit of the Truth to others. Such interpret the scriptures, not as a mere book, but as the rule and inspiration of their own life. You do not merely work up a lesson; you must first live it, and know from experience that what

you say is true.

“The foundation of good class work is in yourself; for your own work reflects your own personality. If you receive the message of the Bible as a living message from God, acting on your own daily life, then you will be able to bring it practically near to the children. Thereby not only will you impart that which you first receive through reading and absorbing the Word of God, but your own life will be brought into harmony with its teaching. The more it is read, the more it is loved; the more often and more closely we hold intercourse with it, the better men and women we become; and when it has saturated the brain with its wisdom, and is pouring into the veins its inspiration and hope, the Truth will flow out of the teachers like rivers of water.”

It is not for one hour a week only that we are teachers. Our example must be consistent with our words. Our deeds are noted, we must be prepared for our scholars to see us at any time and say with pride, “That is my teacher.” Our work does not begin and end on Sunday afternoon, but will in some form colour our whole life. In this respect the work is exacting. Often a lesson is being given when we are least aware of it - a lesson in conduct that calls for constant effort towards consistent conduct. Telling children to “be good” only becomes impelling when the force of example follows the words. Our manner of life will express our inward beliefs. The children will quickly recognise the earnestness of our character and be impressed by it.

A zeal for the work develops naturally when the value and possibility are realised; the deeper your enthusiasm, the more potent will be your teaching. Your scholars will imbibe from you something of that compelling spirit that leads to the love of God and respect for His Word. This is the qualification without which all others are useless. It would be rare to find sympathy and love for children absent, where the other qualifications are present, although it is quite possible for that spirit to be unaccompanied by the Love of God. Combine the two and then go on towards the highest goal of the teacher’s ideal - to have their names enrolled on the honours list of those who shall shine as the stars forever.

These personal qualifications will find expression in a passion to inspire others with the rich truths of God. It is the passion that desires to help and save others. It is the reflection of the Love of God in you, to be doing good, lasting good, by directing young minds towards the saving grace of Jesus Christ. Those who are engaged in the work, realise this more than those who have not had any experience in the Sunday School. They have found Christ for themselves and must lead others to the same source of life and righteousness. And the actual work is fuel to the flames. For when so engaged, we are doing

His will, and are very near to Him.

The extent to which these personal qualifications should be apparent in our habits and thoughts is more fully realised by thinking upon the inconsistent actions of those, who during the week participate in practises and pleasures contrary to the Spirit of Christ, then on Sunday, seek to lead the children in the way he himself does not follow. Can the scholar believe when the teacher's own actions condemn?

The background preparation

The next step is to realise that these essentials can be cultivated. No one in fact, is the perfect example, Christ is that, and those who aspire to be true teachers must be fitted for the task - the beginning is with themselves.

We are now able to introduce the next aspect of the teacher's work. It is their duty to impart knowledge. To do that, the teacher must first know as much as possible about the subject. None of us knew very much to commence with; we accumulated our store of knowledge as time went on. The teacher will aim to always increase that store, building up a rich treasury of truths ready for use when required. One needs to read and memorise all that would be profitable to the class. There should be more known about the subject than that actually necessary to give the lesson. Build up a reserve of knowledge of facts relevant to Sunday School work. This gives richness and breadth to teaching. Some knowledge of history and geography is helpful, but above all know the Bible teaching on the subject to be dealt with. Search the scriptures and be familiar with the references given. The better the teacher understands the lesson the easier the task becomes, and the more clearly it is grasped by the scholars. This mind development, which is so essential to our work, can be aquired only by a careful and prayerful reading of the scriptures. The mind familiar with the scripture teaching is quick to see and explain the meaning of the lessons. This development may become a habit with great profit to the teacher. There are books that give instructive information, and items of news that may add interest to your lesson which can all be aids to the class work.

Preparation of the lesson

So far we have followed the lines of general preparation - we now turn our attention to the preparation for a given lesson.

Our own Sunday School system provides notes for the teachers' aid in preparing the lesson. There is a high standard and much research is evident in these notes, and they are a valuable aid to the teacher.

Each teacher will be familiar with the particular notes for the lesson being

prepared, but (and we stress this) - it is not intended that these notes in their present form should be given as the actual lesson - the practice of reading from, or reciting the notes is to be discouraged. "Notes will not supply to the teacher the place of personal study of the subject to be taught. Whatever in them is suitable to the needs of the class, we must make our own, if we are to use it to effect." By all means be conversant with the same order as they are given. Look on the notes as ingredients which go to make up your own lesson. Now, a capable cook can take certain quantities of flour, milk, eggs, butter, sugar, raisins, cream, etc., carefully mix, place in containers and serve . . . Oh no! You say; you have left out the most important phase of all, you have forgotten to put it all in the oven for 20 minutes. Well, if selected and mixed ingredients only become palatable when subjected to heat for a given period, so too, our lessons only become attractive and acceptable when subjected to the fire of our enthusiasm, zeal and knowledge. If you serve up a cold, soggy mixture, do not blame the recipients for neglecting it. Blame the cook instead.

Now it is true that lessons can be made attractive so that heads are bent forward, and eyes are bright with interest. Herein is the skill of the teacher made most evident. But do you know where to commence the exercise of that skill? Remember, that practice and experience are the only ways to become expert. The time to make the lesson interesting is before you come before the class. The interest is either woven in or dropped out when you knit your lesson together. Thought and study of this point will repay in the encouraging results you will see manifest.

Now this may sound formidable, but we assure you that careful selection and arrangement of the lesson notes, will make a difficult preparation increasingly easy and profitable. We believe all recognise that preparation of the lesson is absolutely essential. To go to your class, unless in an emergency, without previous preparation is courting failure. You will lack that sparkle and keenness of mind, and the children, being quick to respond to influence, will be restless.

Each teacher will probably have his own method on which he frames the lesson. A definite method is advisable, and always to be followed. Contrast a lesson set out on prearranged lines, converging to one definite thought, with a disjointed rambling talk, now on one point, and then on another - now close to, then drifting away from the lesson. "*Show thyself approved of God - a workman that needeth not to be ashamed - rightly dividing the word of Truth.*"

The last phrase can be translated as "*accurate in deliverance of the work of Truth.*"

Things to remember

Things to remember in preparation of the lesson are:-

- (1) To gather the main features into your mind by reading; visualize the completed lesson. Select the main idea and hold to that. Gather as much information of the subject as you are able, study the "Lesson" notes well - arrange your own notes in a selected order.
- (2) Do analyse the lesson so that all details may be allotted to suitable sections, for example:
 - (a) The introduction.
 - (b) The selected reading.
 - (c) Facts leading to the main topic or theme.
 - (d) Details relating to, but subordinate to the main topic.
 - (e) Conclusions to be gained from the foregoing sections.

This arrangement provides for building up a lesson step by step, so that it will be easy to follow and to maintain interest to the end. Always lead the scholars from section to section through the lesson. Preparation is simplified too, if this, or some other efficient method, is adopted.

There are reasons for this ordered arrangement because certain principles are thereby put into effect. For example, introduction enables the teacher to briefly indicate the path the class will follow. Children like to know the way they are to travel. The mind is not then groping or stumbling in the dark, but instead, will anticipate and recognise the features of the lessons as they become apparent. Always introduce a connecting link with the previous lesson "a stepping off place". This may be left until the rest of the lesson is completed; then it is probable that the "link" will occur to you spontaneously. But always link up lesson to lesson. One single thought is enough to give connection. Include it.

Reading selected scripture should be preceded by a brief statement of the purpose for which it has been chosen. This serves also to unite the reading with the lesson.

Lastly. To provide for well chosen descriptive thoughts, in explanation of the facts leading to the lesson. Here, if at all possible, commence with matters of personal interest and facts concerning the acts of the persons. We are all more interested in what other people said or did, than in abstract principles. Give full attention to the scripture references.

The chief object, the central theme, is thus naturally introduced. Details which support can then be added. This may include, historical dates, geographical notes, etc.

Let fall some suggestions of the deeper meaning the lesson is to convey, so that in the last section of the lesson, bright minds will see the application; this could be drawn from the children by questions and not told to them. We admit this to be somewhat difficult, but there is a reason; for the mind remembers better what it discovers for itself.

One writer referring to the lesson preparation says, "Never pass over the plain moral teaching of the Bible to make way for allegory or adaptation." And another, "That the Christadelphian Sunday School teacher should lose no opportunity of instilling the doctrinal aspect of the truth into minds of the children. This does not mean trying to cram it in." It has been said that "unbelief is the reaction from bad teaching. What is called religious education is, to speak the blunt truth, often only a preparation for scepticism." And we might add that bad teaching is mainly due to lack of ordered and thorough preparation. These are brief suggestions that we have gathered from many sources, and adopted in compiling lessons. Two things that should always be remembered are, Classify and Simplify. You cannot be too simple. You will find that after some practice, the classification of the lesson to its various parts can be done easily and quickly. Details can be placed in that order to which they are most appropriate. In doing this the teacher will quickly discover the treasure that lies hidden under the surface.

Can you now see why it is not always advisable to follow the notes in the arranged order? Take them to pieces and fit them together again and see how skilful you will become at building lesson pictures.

Presenting the lesson

The hour comes, when, with the lesson well prepared, you face the class. Here is test for which all your qualifications are developed. You are to impart your knowledge in a manner that will impress and influence.

Procedure: "Get attention." "Just as well be blowing bubbles," as contrive to talk to an inattentive class. Some are most successful in getting attention. Evidently some happy talent is a gift with those who have the children engrossed with the things they are telling them. And yet it is no secret at all, for the gifted ones more naturally employ the means that others, less gifted, must develop for themselves.

There were times when we would have grasped any means to win attention, when some restless young person has been intent on watching everything else except the person in the chair, or perhaps is passing sly looks and giggles to some other scholar. Do you know the type? And what are you to do with them?

Quite often we do the wrong thing and try to fit a straight jacket on them, and

make things worse. It does really seem more reasonable when there is lack of attention, to recognise that they are simply not interested, and stop. Stop at once. Introduce an illustration, tell a story, and try to draw the scholars into the picture. "Have they known so and so?" "Did they see?" or, "What would you do if?" are questions which can be directed to the restless ones. Speak to them. Take up their mind get them interested, and then switch on to the track of the lesson again. Try this plan and possibly you will be surprised at the results. Well chosen allegory often proves valuable in creating interest. Illustrate your words by reference to some well-known facts or experiences. Such will always remain long in the memory, and help to force attention to the lesson.

Listlessness is attributable to other causes besides inattention, such as, ill-health, and natural dullness of mind. We should recognise that this is more the child's misfortune than his fault, and treat him accordingly.

Personal contact with the slow child outside the Sunday School hours may draw out the latent sympathy, and if he finds you a staunch friend, will give all the loyalty that he is capable of.

The simple, concise "everyday" language is best when addressing your class. What may be quite simple to you, may not be at all simple to the pupil. Therefore avoid words not easily understood. Keep the sentences short and crisp.

Your own personal manner before the class will have a strong influence upon the children. Be bright and cheerful, but not flippant. Be earnest and fully interested yourself, and you will inspire the same spirit in your class. Always be dignified, but not too austere; rather seek to set your scholars at ease by your sympathetic manner. By this friendly attitude you will gain the confidence and loyalty of the children, and if in a senior section, be sure the class can place confidence in your intellectual ability.

Here are some "don'ts" for teachers:

- Don't turn a question aside. If unprepared, ask time for you to consider your answer, then do your best.
- Don't be sarcastic (child memories are long and will not forget an unkind, cutting word).
- Don't try to crush out blemishes.
- Don't laugh at any mistakes, however foolish they may be.
- Don't be scornful.
- Don't raise your voice unduly, as that is likely to repel; modulate the voice so as to reach the farthest scholar, and speak clearly.
- Never lose your temper (teachers are sorely tried at times).

Attention to these details will ensure an engaging friendly attitude, which will go far to win the love and confidence of the children - a prize worth seeking

When you have that reward, the children will willingly allow you to mould them, and will trust you as a staunch friend. This is the zenith of the teacher's work, but when it is reached, and you have gained the title of a friend, a "pal", you have the honour of being their counsellor and guide.

Once gained, it will not be so difficult to keep that quiet dignity, which is an attribute of the capable teacher.

Another factor affecting the teacher's work should be mentioned. It is in regard to the child's own mental attitude towards religious teaching which is most difficult to ascertain, as few will reveal their inner feelings. There is a natural antipathy to religion in some, but it would be unwise to assume that a child is incapable of the deep desire for righteousness in life.

The ideals of childhood are real, often becoming the basis of the full grown character. They need just as tender care as any seedlings. It should be the teacher's aim to lead the child's mind to these high ideals, by showing that such lead to true and lasting happiness. Is this not better than assuming, because unexpressed, the lack of inner desire for godliness?

Some children may be troubled by a sense of sin and will turn to the remedy when it is realised to be a remedy. It is just here that the true teacher will give of his or her best.

In this address I have endeavoured to show, that there is a genuine value in the teacher's work - calling for the best of efforts. The motive actuating the teacher should be clearly perceived - an aim which the knowledge of the truth compels us to regard as all important. The foundation qualities to put that aim into effect are those pertaining to the teacher's own moral character. In that respect, self-training is required, because of the moral force of example.

Knowledge of the Scriptural truths, and the acquisition of more knowledge is essential. The success in imparting that knowledge is largely dependent upon careful preparation, with subject matter arranged in orderly manner, concise and simple.

The teacher's manner before the class will make or mar his or her efforts. The obtaining of respect and confidence is the hall-mark of excellence.

Conclusion

There is still an aspect of our work I should like to mention before concluding.

I am sure that every teacher has at times experienced that sense of utter discouragement. When duty seems but duty - lacking in inspiration and

reward - when the conditions are trying, and the circumstances suggest that the labour is hardly worthwhile, and so combine to sap the vitality of the spirit to persevere. There are difficulties it is true; but if the work be approached as a duty, cold and uninspiring, then the teacher will miss that sure reward that follows perseverance. For what at first seemed a call to duty proves to be the path to rich rewards. The difficulties faced, with that persistent effort that strives towards the ideal, will bring its own rich harvest. The exercise of painstaking faithfulness will win for you that genuine interest and delight of sitting in the teacher's chair. And not in the least of present rewards is the smile of trust and love radiating from the child. Rich indeed are those who command respect from their children. There is a reward to our own spirits too, in the influence which comes from doing what is right, so acting as a curb upon selfish interests. There comes too, a happiness in being a help to others. "How truly do we become labourers with God, Whose will it is to work by human agencies, and if by words of ours we can help to wean the children from evil and set their feet in the path of good, I am convinced that God has rewarded the right aim of many a Sunday School teacher by a sensible deepening of the spiritual life." This, too, is leading us towards a greater sphere of usefulness. For the faithful doing of God's work in upholding and teaching His truth is doing honour to Him, and the promise is that such shall receive honour.

The true teacher will seek that great honour of being chosen by the Master Teacher to turn many to righteousness. Then it will not be as now, by words in weakness, strivings towards the ideal, but with the power of the Spirit of God that quells the raging of the nations, and brings glory to God on earth and peace to all men.

It may be - no - certainly will be, if we do our part faithfully, that when those who have been teachers are shining as stars forever, there shall be included in their number, we, who have humbly tried to do our best.