

THE AIMS OF OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL

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Before stating our aims let us acquaint ourselves with a brief sketch of the history of the Sunday School. In 1527 Martin Luther established several Sunday Schools in Germany for the instruction of children and young people in the reading of God's word. The modern Sunday schools, as an institution, was founded by Robert Raikes of Gloucester, England in 1781. In 1816 the first Sunday schools of America opened in New York. Today they are spread all over the country. I haven't secured any statistics of the Canadian Sunday schools. In the United States in 1910 there were 178,214 Sunday schools, 1,648,664 officers and teachers, and 14,685,997 pupils. If we could secure present figures, we would find the total much larger. However, there are millions still untouched by the Sunday school.

The Sunday school has been a worthy institution. A judge in an American court in recent years revealed the fact that the young criminals were boys who had never attended or seldom attended the Sunday school. One hundred of the greatest men of the world gave strong testimony in favor of the Sunday school, and stated that their lives had been moulded by the powerful influence of the Sunday school as well as their early home training. I shall go outside of the clergy and gather a few testimonies. "The Sunday school boys of today are the foundation of tomorrow's Church and Christianity, and without some way of introducing our children to Jesus and His ways, both of them are bound to go down." (Jack Miner, Canadian naturalist). A. R. Duggart, J.P., England, says "Our Sunday schools are one of the strongest bulwarks against the enemies of man's soul and are a potent factor in the national character building. This noble institution exists to introduce plastic and impressionable life to Jesus, the soul's true and only Redeemer." Ex-President Herbert Hoover, U. S. A., says, "The Sabbath school is at the very root of the religious life, with all its benefits to the individual and nation, and for this reason I cordially commend all efforts to enlarge its field of usefulness." Solomon, the wiseman of the Bible, gives a hint on each side of the question in the following Scriptures: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Prov. 22:6). "But a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." (Prov. 29:15).

Realizing that the Sunday school is at the very root or foundation of the future life of the individual, church and nation, and that it is one of those great institutions that moulds character and shapes conduct of the youth of our land in those impressionable years and that plastic stage, we should see the importance of making our Sunday school an excellent one.

In the first place we should have a corps of officers and teachers who have an experience of salvation wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit. A knowledge of the word of God should run hand in hand with an experience of salvation. A course in teacher's training might prove a source of help to any teacher. Adaptability as well as a religious experience and a good knowledge of the Word should characterize every Sunday school teacher. Some are qualified to teach the older ones while others have that special gift with young people and children. The school must have spiritual teachers if it is to be a success.

The next thing to consider in connection with our Sunday school is, "What we are to teach."

The Bible is to be our main text book first, last, always. The Sunday school is for the purpose of studying God's Word for our instruction, and for the instruction and salvation of others, and for the worship of the true God. The literature and Sunday school helps should be the kinds that promote holiness and not modernism. The pupils should be given a proper knowledge of God, man, and the relation between them. A sound doctrine should be coupled with a good experience. The teaching of our Sunday school must be Christ-centered. Some deny truth concerning Christ and the Bible when God wants them to declare it. Some teach a social gospel when God wants them to teach a saving gospel. Jesus Christ is the world's Great Example, Only Redeemer, and Only Mediator between God and man. We may have to present Him in different ways to different classes, but we must always present Him as the Saviour from all sin. Each teacher should do his or her best to win the pupils to Christ.

Next, I would suggest that we need a good atmosphere. God's presence along with sound doctrine and a good experience will give us a good atmosphere for us to hold our Sunday school session in. We must get God's blessing down upon our souls, upon the class, and upon the schools. Some pupils have been won to Christ by the teaching, and others have been won by the godly life and influence of the teachers. We need to be spiritual, creating an atmosphere that is conducive to the saving of souls.

The next thing we need is vision. You may say, "We have vision when we have selected spiritual teachers who teach a sound doctrine, live a godly life, and create a spiritual atmosphere." That is true, but we need to have a brighter, clearer vision of the needy souls in our town, village, or countryside. We need to see the awfulness of sin and hell and the glory of salvation and heaven. We need to see the mighty workings of the enemy and then get a glimpse of the power of the Almighty God. Some of our older ones are about to receive their crown, but what about those who have never gotten to God or those who have fallen by the way? How many of the high school and college students of the towns and cities attend Sunday school today? Are we concerned about the youth of our land? Children should be snatched now before they are ensnared by sin. Our Sunday school is too late to save many lives from destruction among the older ones, and maybe too late to save some souls from hell, but we are not too late to save many of the younger generation if we will get proper vision of our Sunday school all equipped under God in the present and future life of our community in the face of depression economically and a decline morally and spiritually. We need to see our responsibilities in service as well as our privileges in grace.

A proper vision begets a burden. This was illustrated in the building of the Panama Canal from ocean to ocean. This was demonstrated when a man got a vision of sending a message from Europe to America and spent years in performing his task. Nehemiah's vision took the form of a burden that carried him forward to undertake and complete the building of the walls.

In the last place we shall say that cooperation plus some hard work may help to bring about the desire of our heart. The Sunday school should make an honest effort to reach all the boys and girls of their community who are not in Sunday school and to invite them to Sunday school. This would be a crusade worth while. Everybody in his place with the cause at heart and a mind to work could do much in getting

many more into our Sunday schools and finally into the Kingdom of Christ. May God give us a faith that will laugh at impossibilities and say, "It shall be done."

FEELING OUR NEED OF HOLINESS

Men must first come to the place where they feel their need of the experience of holiness; second, where they hunger and thirst for the experience. Jesus, in His marvelous Sermon on the Mount, said, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

When hungry or thirsty physically, one has in him a craving for, a longing desire for food or water. When his hunger becomes intense, he begins to seek for food to satisfy his hunger, or water to quench his thirst. Every truly converted man will find in himself this longing for heart holiness, and if he continues to walk in the light of God, he will soon seek and find the gracious experience of heart holiness, a pure heart.

Mrs. Amanda Smith, a negress, was converted under the ministry of Dr. Inskip in the year of 1856 and some few years later she sought and obtained the experience of sanctification. She was a very successful evangelist, and preached under the anointing of the Holy Ghost.

In one of her messages she gave the following, of her experience: "I had now begun to seek entire sanctification. I asked an elder what was meant by being 'pure in heart.' 'Oh, child,' he said, 'that means you must come as near to it as you can.' I went home, but, oh, this hunger and thirst after righteousness was not satisfied. When I was convicted for holiness I was in a clearly justified state. I had no doubt about my acceptance with God. When I was converted, it was conviction of guilt; now it was conviction of want. 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God'—the living God. 'That comes to me what I want.' I said, 'It's God!' * * * When I read, 'Rejoice when men persecute you' I felt that was not my experience; there was a feeling of retaliation; and when they spoke about me and blamed me, I wanted to justify myself instead of leaving it all with God. Then I read, 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification.' I went to an old deacon and asked, 'What's the meaning of this?' 'Oh, he said, 'that's the blessing people get just before they die.' Well, I didn't want to die; I wanted to live and work for God. And then they told me, 'You'll never live this life until you die.' I wanted to live, and not die."

This experience can be obtained and enjoyed in this present life. No one can truly live for God who has come to the place where he has felt his need and then backed down and refused to walk in the light of holiness. It is this experience that makes men able to please God and live a victorious life.

Many, like Mrs. Smith, have come to the place in life where they have felt their need and desired all God had for them, but by the influence of some professor of religion, have been made to believe they could not obtain this experience in this life, and thus they have tried to live for God without the fulness of the blessing, and have failed. Some have gone back into sin, while others profess to be Christians, and fight the truth of Bible holiness.

The coming in of the Holy Ghost gives men power in this life for service and makes them conquerors over every opposing power of darkness.—The Church Herald.