

THE PASTOR AND HIS SUNDAY SCHOOL

By W. L. Fernley

The challenge of the Ministry is to continue to meet and persuade the people that the Gospel message is the Good News of God for men, and to seek to influence them to hear and heed the message of Saving Grace.

The organizations of the local church are set up to do this very thing and the institution of the Sunday School is perhaps the most important auxiliary of the church to meet this great challenge.

The local church must have a vision of the great need of training and teaching the people young and old in the main doctrines and truths of the Bible. We must have a program that suits the needs of all ages. The Sunday School supplies a wonderful opportunity for the propagation of the Biblical way of salvation, and can be the means in the hand of God of turning many from the ways of death to the way of life.

Without a good Sunday School a church cannot prosper. The influence of the church will rise and fall according to the efforts put forth to reach humanity through the teaching of the written Word as taught in the Sunday School. We cannot emphasize too much as pastors the great God-given opportunities that are ours as workers together with God through the medium of the S. S. A pastor interested in the work of His God-given calling will see to it that his Sunday School is progressive and appealing, and never be satisfied until his pupils, young and old alike, become a part of the working church of Jesus Christ.

The children and grown-ups must be gathered together and brought under the sound of the Gospel if ever we are to see our work go forward. What greater inspiration is there in the work of the church than to have a Sunday School, filled with children and adults, singing, praying and listening to the message of hope and salvation. I believe the key to a live church is held by a successful Sunday School. It must command our attention, consume our zeal, and become part of our ministry to see to it that the Sunday School becomes the all important arm of our work that draws men, women, boys and girls into the great and glorious experience of a personal acquaintanceship with Jesus Christ.

There are at least 4 relationships that the pastor must retain and maintain for the success of his Sunday School.

I. THE RELATIONSHIP OF PASTOR AND TEACHERS

The all important work of the Sunday School and its influence upon the scholars will only be for good if the pastors and teachers are in one accord with the grand purpose of winning their pupils for Christ. The great work of the Sunday School is to see every person won to Jesus Christ. If the pastors and teachers work together for this end their efforts will be rewarded in seeing definite results in the lives of those who come under their care.

Every pastor and teacher working together in our Sunday Schools denominationally, dedicated to the God-given privilege of teaching the Word of God to all the students would result in a spiritual harvest being gathered every year in our separate schools.

The pastor must see to it that the teachers feel and sense their great responsibility as week by week the truths of the Scriptures are presented to their pupils. A Sunday School teacher should be made to realize that his or her work

is of primary importance to the progress of the church. Lives are molded by the impressions that come to bear upon the minds, consciences, and hearts of those who hear the message of the Gospel.

Every pastor and teacher in our Sunday School should work as a unit with one specific aim to bring about the salvation of those who come to hear the good news of salvation.

II. THE RELATIONSHIP OF PASTOR AND PUPILS

As difficult as the task may seem it is imperative that the pastor get to know every Sunday School attendant by name. There is no better way to keep people interested in the Sunday School than making them to feel you have an interest in them. I wonder how many pastors having, say a Sunday School of about 100 members, knows all their names after one year? It shows a lack of concern on the pastor's part if week after week goes by and he fails to speak to some of the students. The wide-awake pastor will make it his business to speak to this one and that one, thereby making them to feel that the pastor is friendly and anxious to get to know them.

Then of course there is the opportunity afforded the pastor to continue the pastor-pupil-relationship by home visitation. This contact is indispensable if the Sunday School is to be a success. One of the great joys of the ministry is to call on a home where one or more members of the family attend the Sunday School and thereby assure the home of your continued interest in it. If we are to have successful Sunday Schools the pastor must visit its members.

III. THE RELATIONSHIP OF PASTOR AND SUNDAY SCHOOL AS A MEANS TO FEED THE CHURCH

The efforts of the pastor are exerted towards an increase in his church membership. No pastor should feel that children can go through his Sunday School without them being aware of the importance of belonging to the local church. If we consider it necessary to teach and preach the message of salvation to our young people, then it should follow that after they are won to Christ they ought to unite with the church.

We need to emphasize the fact that belonging to the church is a very important part of their spiritual experience. Our churches offer the very best standard of Christian living and the finest of Christian fellowship; therefore we should do all within our power to see our Sunday School students eventually won into the confidence and affection of the church.

Young people should feel the honour and confidence that the church has in them by being offered the right hand of fellowship into our church organization. I am not suggesting that we keep pestering them about this matter, but if we would carefully watch them and wait the opportune moment they would undoubtedly be pleased that the pastor had faith in them as to suggest the wisdom of joining the church. We need the admonition of Jesus in this regard, "Be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves."

IV. THE RELATIONSHIP OF PASTOR AND THE SUNDAY SCHOOL PROGRAM

The emphasis of all of our Sunday School literature is to the end that the minds and hearts of the students should receive spiritual instruction. The importance of teaching the children to

think and reason and feel the influence of the Bible in their own lives is one of the essential points in our Sunday School program. We are tempted as a denomination to exhort our people to an experience. This is very necessary, yet we cannot expect to establish those who come under our care in the TRUTH, unless they come to it with an enlightened intellect. We have a classical illustration of this in Paul's epistle to Timothy, chapter 3:14-15:

"But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation through faith that is in Christ Jesus."

An experience is born in knowledge. We act because we have reasons for doing so. The Sunday School program should be so ordered and arranged that each person, young or old, receives instruction in the field of the Christian experience.

A definite appeal should be made in the various classes during the course of the year that will bring the pupil to the place of making a definite decision regarding the claims of Christ upon his or her life. Our Sunday School classes should be the place of real evangelism. Personal, plain and pointed questions should be asked the students as to the wisdom of letting Jesus Christ into their hearts.

The pastor should promote such a program in the Sunday School that will appeal to the students in a manner that will stimulate and quicken the hearts of the people towards things spiritual.

To conclude may we say that the interest displayed by the pastor in the Sunday School will be a means of encouragement to teachers and students alike as well as to the church in general.

If you as a pastor have let the Sunday School sessions come and go week after week, and have treated them as a matter of fact, and have been perhaps a little neglectful of the opportunities of real value that have been offered you, perhaps this paper has been of some help.

I trust that we all as pastors who have care of the flock of God will be always found feeding, leading, and helping those who we find are under our care and charge. God grant that we all strive to do our best in this regard, for one day we will have to give account as to how we have used the opportunities of service that have come to us through the medium of the Sunday School.

—A paper read at the Minister's Conference held recently at Barkers Point, N. B.

God's gracious desire is to bless us; our gravest calamity is to compel God to leave us alone.—Earle F. Wilde.

THE DIVINE OUTPOURING

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sing of "Old Time Power" of "Higher Ground" and then leave it all in the hymnbook and go home. God has choice blessings, rivers of Divine fulness, power to conquer for those who will wait for the Promise. There should be about every Christian a sense of triumph. We ought to impress the world as being charged with divine energy, drunk on heavenly wine.

"Is not thy grace as mighty now,
As when Elijah felt its pow'r?
When glory beamed from Moses' brow,
When Job endured the trying hour?"

Brethren, let our souls be stirred, let our hearts be strangely warmed, let our prayers ascend with "strong crying and tears" until we receive for our age "THE DIVINE OUTPOURING."
—Wesleyan Methodist