

FIRST WORDS
TO
YOUNG CHRISTIANS

by

Copyright @ 1905

THE MOODY PRESS CHICAGO

CHAPTER SIX -
DUTIES IN THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

IT is the uniform desire of all true converts to do something to glorify CHRIST. The joy and peace which they have themselves experienced, they long to see others enjoy; and having been led to feel the value of their own souls, they are made intensely to long for the salvation of the souls of others. Every soul that knows JESUS will long to work for JESUS, and the honest, spontaneous cry of the renewed heart is:

"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Now, in looking for a field in which to labor for CHRIST, you will find a most useful and suitable one in Sunday school. GOD alone can tell, eternity alone can unfold, the good that has been done by this institution. It was a happy day for the church, a happy day for the world, when Robert Raikes conceived the idea of gathering the children together on Sunday "to hear of heaven, and learn the way." He had little idea of the great things that would grow out of such a small beginning, but those who are faithful in a few things, GOD will make rulers over many things.

In giving an account of his first efforts that good man says:

"The beginning of this scheme was entirely owing to accident. Some business leading me one morning into the suburbs of the city, where the lowest of the people reside, I was struck with concern at seeing a group of children, wretchedly ragged, playing in the street. I asked an inhabitant whether those children belonged to that part of the town, and lamented their misery and idleness.

"'Ah, sir,' said the woman to whom I was speaking, 'Could you take a view of this part of the town on Sunday, you would be shocked indeed, for then the street is filled with multitudes of these wretches who, released on that day from employment, spend their time in noise and riot, cursing and swearing in a manner so shocking as to convey to any serious mind an idea of hell, rather than of any other place. Upon Sunday they are all given up to follow their inclinations without restraint, as their parents, totally abandoned themselves, have no idea of instilling into

the minds of their children principles to which they themselves are entire strangers."

He then formed the first Sunday school in the world, and, after a three years' trial, he wrote to a friend:

"I wish you were here to make inquiry into the effort. A woman, who lives in a lane where I fixed a school, told me some time ago that the place was quite a heaven upon Sundays, compared to what it used to be. The number who have learned to read and say their catechism is so great that I am astonished at it."

From this small beginning the work spread, till in Great Britain there were about one million of children in Sunday schools, in the course of a few years. And now, in the United States, and all over the world, millions of voices unite in singing: "I'm glad I'm in this army."

And yet, though no one denies the good that these Schools are doing, it is a melancholy fact that superintendents often find it hard to get teachers enough out of the church to sustain them. You will sometimes find a church numbering three or four hundred members, and yet their Sunday school really languishing for want of teachers. This is a shame and a disgrace in the sight of the world, and must be highly displeasing to that blessed SAVIOUR who said: "**Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.**" I hope, my reader, that you will require no urging to engage in this work, but that under a deep sense of duty, and personal obligation to Him who bought you with His own blood, you will enter upon it with all your heart.

In order that your mind may be suitably impressed with the importance of the work, think of the infinite value of the souls you are going to instruct. They are to live for ever, and your words may make impressions that will last through eternal ages.

"Don't write there," said one to a lad who was writing with a diamond pin on a pane of glass in the window of an hotel.

"Why?" said he.

"Because you can't rub it out," was the reply.

Remember that it is upon deathless spirits that you are writing and making impressions, and that these impressions are to remain for ever - can never be rubbed out; and let this thought make you solemnly careful what thought you present to the minds of your young charge. You are to meet them again at the bar of GOD, and to, give a strict account of what you have spoken.

Seek to meet your class, therefore, with a tender, loving spirit - that spirit that brought JESUS from His throne in glory to suffer the agonies of the cross.

There is a transforming, melting,

MAGICAL POWER IN LOVE,

that will be felt by the most careless and hardened. A teacher that has prayed for his class, and comes to them with his heart full of love for their souls, will have better order, better attention, and do a thousand times more good, than he who loses his temper and permits himself to indulge an angry spirit. Let the following case illustrate:

"Not long ago a gentleman visited a Sunday school, and being a little before the time of opening he looked around him. One class that he noticed had four boys in it. Soon their teacher, a tall, fine-looking young man came in, but with a downcast countenance. He took his seat with a cold, morose, almost angry look. He paid, seemingly, no attention to the boys. A cap was knocked off the seat. That made a titter. The teacher turned around, and said sharply:

"Boys, be still!"

"Soon something else caused a louder titter to pass around the class. Moving quickly around the second time, he said:

"Boys, I tell you to be still!"

"His face again assumed its cold expression, now slightly tinged with real crossness. A third slight disturbance occurred, when with look and voice and manner decidedly angry, he said:

"Boys, I tell you again to stop! I won't have this!"

Now it would be impossible for that teacher to do his class any good. It has been truly said that to make a child angry during his lesson, is to give him his food scalding hot. We must not forget that we were once children ourselves, and had childish faults; and that it is hard for the young to fix their minds for any great length of time upon serious things.

MAKE YOUR INSTRUCTIONS ATTRACTIVE

by preparing yourself with illustrations suitable to the young mind. Study the lesson carefully, and with all the aids you can find. Be kind and affectionate to your little charge, and you will soon gain an influence over them that will be seen in its blessed results for ever.

If they are sick or in trouble, visit them at their homes. Show them that you are their best friend, and you will bind them to you for life. When I think of my Sunday school teacher my heart bounds with gratitude, and there is no man in the world I would be more glad to see.

Let your instructions be spiritual and practical, and such as will tend directly to the conversion of their souls. Dr. Payson says:

"If GOD should place in your hand a diamond, and tell you to inscribe on it a sentence which should be read at the last day, and shown there as an idea of your thoughts and feelings, what caution would you exercise in the selection! This is what GOD has done!

He has placed before you immortal minds, more imperishable than the diamond, on which you are continually inscribing, by your spirit or example, something which will remain, and be exhibited for or against you at the judgment day."

There are some teachers whose instructions are almost entirely speculative - the wanderings of the children of Israel before reaching the promised land; the description of the temple of Solomon; the journeys of the apostle Paul, with a geographical account of the countries which he passed through, and the cities he visited; together with curious questions to be solved from the Bible. Now I do not say that the knowledge of such things is not useful, but it does not tend to promote the highest object of Sunday school instruction - the conversion of the souls of the young. The illumination of the intellect is good in its place. but the heart must not be forgotten.

Remember that children are capable of conversion at a very early age. Timothy from a child knew the Holy Scriptures, and was made wise unto salvation by them. I once knew a lady who, in her instructions, constantly aimed at the conversion of her class. It was her habit to pray for each one specially, to visit them at their homes for religious conversation, and to watch anxiously for any tokens of the truth beginning to take effect. The result was that conversions were frequent among them.

Teach your class how they can be saved from their lost and perishing condition. Hold up CHRIST before their young eyes in His saving power.

The Gospel, in its beautiful simplicity, is admirably adapted to the mind of the child as well as the philosopher. And no matter what else you teach them, if you neglect this, you leave them destitute of eternal life. A man who had lately been converted said to his minister:

"Oh, sir, give your congregation something to do that will make their peace with GOD, and you will please them mightily. It is just what people like. Why, the biggest miser in the parish would pull out his purse and give something to help build a church, and they would put a steeple on it that would reach up near the clouds, and put a weathercock on the top of it again, if you would just tell them that it would help to save them. But people don't like to think that they can do nothing; and when they hear ministers preaching, '**Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved,**' they step over it, and over it, and miss it, perhaps, like me, for twenty-seven years; and some, I am afraid, even till they die."

Another matter I would urge upon you. Be punctual and persevering in your attendance upon the Sabbath school.

One of the greatest difficulties that superintendents have to contend with is

THE IRREGULARITY OF TEACHERS

in their attendance. They will take a class and begin with great seeming earnestness, but in a few months their zeal begins to flag, and they will be frequently absent; it may be, give up altogether. I have seen a class of thoughtless boys far more punctual in their attendance than their teacher, and he, too, a professing Christian.

This is a sad sight, and calculated to do great injury to the cause of truth.

My reader, I hope better things of you. Be in your place, at your post of duty, regularly, as the holy day of GOD dawns upon you. If compelled to be absent, state the reason to your class, and introduce a friend to take your place till you return.

And do not give way to discouragement, if you are not so successful as you could wish. It is peculiarly a work of faith. You may be doing a great deal more good than you can see, and, at any rate, it is yours to

GO ON IN THE PATH OF DUTY,

sowing the seed, and leaving the result with GOD.

"It is no use to try," said a young man, "they are so careless and unconcerned that I am quite sure that no good can be done."

An aged gentleman, to whom the remark was made, replied:

"Such an argument would at one time have satisfied me; now, however, I can see its fallacy. It is forty years since I was first a Sunday school teacher, and the boys whom I taught seemed so perversely deaf to all my words that at length I considered myself justified in giving it up as a hopeless task. During the ensuing thirty years of my life, I continued, uninterested in the cause of Sunday schools, until a circumstance occurred which led me to see my error, and to return to my duty.

"One evening as I was returning from church, I was accosted by a man who smiled in my face, and holding out his hand to me, inquired whether my name was not Mr. P-. I answered that it was so.

"Do you remember,' added he, 'a boy of the name of Dempster, that attended your Sunday school about thirty years ago?'

"Dempster!' said I, 'I remember Tom Dempster very well; and a very wild and wicked boy he was!'

"And that wild and wicked boy was I,' said the man, 'though now, thanks be to GOD, I am a very different person from what I was then. It was your instructions, blessed by GOD's SPIRIT, that brought conviction of the truth home to my mind, long after I had left your school.'"

Said the old gentleman, as he concluded his statement:

"My object has since been to do my work, and pray for the SPIRIT to do His."

"Ye who on each returning sacred day,
Circled by listening youthful groups are seen,
Who pour instruction on the tender mind,
From the pure well-spring of eternal truth,
In joyful hope pursue your work of love.
The Shepherd's eye, which watches all the lambs,
Upon you smiles, His kind approval cheers.
Hands, which the temple of our GOD shall rear,
'Tis yours to guide and train to heavenly skill.
They whom benighted heathen tribes shall hail
'How beautiful are their feet who publish peace:
Learn from your lips salvation's joyful sound."

~ end of chapter 6 ~

* * *