

a few words of counsel to our readers, on the importance of their work and the nature of the qualifications for its better accomplishment. The New Year finds us all susceptible to those influences which may tend to our more complete adaptation to the work of winning our young people for Christ. Our success depends very much upon consciously placing ourselves under right conditions. We would all of us be "vessels meet for the Master's use." We must not once only but every day give up ourselves fully to him. "Apart from him, we can do nothing." Our work from first to last is spiritual. By all means let us use our intellectual gifts, cultivate them, improve our minds by all diligence, and the use of all available help from the best books and the wisest men; but our success as Sunday-school teachers depends far more upon our spirituality, our prayerfulness, our sympathy with Christ, than upon anything else. We are utterly unable to do spiritual work unless we are renewed, quickened, and illumined by the Divine Spirit. We need the divine touch; we must realize in our own hearts the saving power of Jesus Christ if we are to be instrumental in saving others.

The salvation of our scholars is our one great aim. Everything else shrinks into mere nothingness compared with it, and it is only when we are living in close fellowship with Christ that we realize the overwhelming restraints of his love, and prepare for our work, and go to our classes resolved to win every scholar for his blessed service. "The love of Christ constraineth us." Nothing short of this will ever impel us to lead the lambs to the Great Shepherd.

St. Paul counsels Timothy to be a "workman that needeth not to be ashamed." This should be the aim of the pastor of the flock, and not less that also of the Sunday-school teacher. This ideal will lead the teacher to conscientious preparation. No teacher is worthy of the work who does not put his conscience into it, and if he puts his conscience into it, he cannot be irregular in his attendance or go with slipshod preparation. He will prepare himself by earnest prayer, by daily communion with Christ, and diligent study of the Word of God. One would hope that any sort of Christian worker would do this; but preparation for Sunday-school teaching must be definite and specific. A wise teacher will take a course of lessons selected by the good judgment of others, or a course selected by himself after

much thought and care. His aim will be to give the mind of God as set forth in the portions selected, and not his own views about the Word. His own views may be very clever and even original, but it is the Word of God, touched into life by the Divine Spirit, that saves, and not our views and opinions upon that Word.

Conscientious preparation is due to the Word itself, to its Divine Author, to our scholars, and to ourselves, if we would gain the respect of our intelligent young people. They can easily see through shams, and simulated earnestness; but they respect those who sincerely wish to do them good, no matter how homely the teaching may be. They soon detect shallowness; and they quite as soon find out if there is anything in the lesson. A wise old father once, in giving advice to his son about his sermon-making, said: "Always put 'summat' (something) in." Let us say, "Always get something out of the lesson or put something into it."

Use the best thoughts of the best minds in your preparation. A first-hand study of the sacred writings is essential, if we would understand the Word. It must first speak to our own hearts; but no wise student of any subject will ignore the studies of master minds upon the subject. It is folly to imagine that we can understand many great subjects in the Bible without consulting the best interpreters. They can show us what we cannot see, and make plain to us what we but dimly apprehend.

To prepare at all adequately we must study our Bible with all available helps thereupon; our scholars, their home life, their daily work, and their environment; and all our studies must be pursued in a prayerful and devout spirit. "To pray well is to work well."

A true teacher will be enthusiastic in his work. By enthusiasm we do not mean fanaticism. Fanaticism expects harvests without ploughing, tilling, or sowing—but there are no results in the kingdom of nature or grace without adequate causes. The principle of all sound husbandry is that "we must first put in, if we would get something out" of the soil. Well-directed, earnest, strenuous toil must sooner or later find its harvest.

We sum up our advice in one word—Be in earnest. No one should take up such a work as ours among the million of our scholars, from whom so much may be expected, unless he intends to be faithful in it. Fidelity to duty means