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## THE SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHER'S PREPARATION OUTSIDE OF THE SCHOOL-ROOM.

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That we may make proper preparation for any work, we must know the nature and design of the work to be performed. A thorough acquaintance with the nature and design of Sabbath School teaching is an element of first importance in the S. S. teacher's preparation.

As to the *nature* of the work, it is the presenting to the minds of the young the grandest truths ever presented to the intellects of rational beings. It is an endeavour to unfold to the minds of others those things into which the angels desire to look. It is to teach men of God, His purposes and plans; of sin, its nature, effects and deserts; of Christ and His salvation; of mercy the richest, of grace the freest, of love the most intense. It is to reveal to the sinner how Christ and His salvation can be appropriated and exemplified in the life.

As to the *design*, it is two-fold, the salvation and edification of souls. Whatever may have been the idea of the first workers in this field, we cannot feel to-day that the existence of Sabbath Schools is justified if they aim simply at secular instruction, or the mere entertainment of the scholars. If Sabbath School teachers direct their efforts wholly or principally to these ends they should not complain if they find as the result a lack of tenderness of heart and conscience, and the absence of earnest inquiry after the Saviour. We are called upon to deal with the spiritual natures of the scholars, and with their intellects or their æsthetic faculties, only as far as these can be moved upon to influence the spiritual being. The design of Sabbath School teaching is so to present Christ that the souls of the young may be won to the Lord, and that everywhere we may hear the children crying, as they did in the temple of old, "Hosannah to the Son of David."

With this idea of the nature and design of the work, we are ready to begin the preparation which is needed before entering the class-room. The first element of this preparation is the *Spiritual*. Under this we mention prayer. If the old adage, "To pray well is to study well," be true, then to teach well the truth of God it will be necessary for the teacher to be often and long alone with God in earnest prayer. "Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law," should be the burden of the teacher's prayer. It will be found that the teacher who relies most upon the Holy Spirit's help to discover the hidden beauties of the Word, has discovered not the beauties only, but also the power to unfold the truth. Prayer is not to be for self alone, it must reach out on behalf of every member of the class. The heart of the scholar must be softened by the gentle influence of the Holy Spirit, so that the seed sown may take root and grow. If asked to mention the one great cause of failure in Sabbath School teaching, we would say, the lack of believing, wrestling prayer for the souls of those committed to our care.

The second element of this preparation is the *Intellectual*. Under this we would group everything in the way of getting the mind ready for the most perfect presentation of the lesson of each Sabbath. By this we mean the careful study of the particular portion of the Word selected—the context—the meaning of different words and phrases. Selecting the leading thought and grouping around it the various truths taught by the lesson. Seeking a wider illustration of the truths by reference to the Bible as a whole. Also the selecting of appropriate illustrations from the Word of God and daily life with which to fix the truth in the minds and hearts of the pupils.

A third element is the *Social*. Under this we would gather all that tends to bring the teacher into touch with scholar, revealing the tastes and inclinations of the young mind. It would include the social visit to the home, the friendly chat by the way, the little act of courtesy and kindness, and many other things that touch the social life; all of which tell so much in getting a ready ear for the truth. It is the teacher that reveals to the scholar that his interest in him is not limited to one hour in the week, but that it extends through every day of the week, and leads him to seek the welfare of the boy in many ways; this is the teacher who wins the confidence and esteem, and exerts a powerful influence over the hearts and minds, of those he seeks to win to the Lord.