

questions will hinge, the third thing is to give attention to the questions themselves. The following are characteristics of a good question :

1. It must be clear, concrete, definite—no uncertainty as to what is meant—with only as many words as are required to make the meaning clear. There should be no ambiguity, such as is seen in the question, "What do parents do to a baby when it enters the home?" asked of a Primary class.

2. It should have one definite object, for example, "Who chased whom around what?"

3. The answer should not be suggested. "Leading questions," such as that asked of an obliging clerk by a customer: "Don't you think this prettier than that?" and such as make guessing easy, like questions requiring "yes" and "no" answers.

4. A good way to make sure that questions will be well expressed is to think them out, write them out, then ask them to some friends. If they cannot see just what the question means, recast it. Practice of this kind will make it easy to take advantage of every "occasional" opportunity as it arises, without fear of losing control of the discussion.

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## SUNDAY SCHOOL PROBLEMS

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### III. THE TOUGH LESSON

A lesson may be hard for either of two general reasons. It may be intrinsically unsuitable so far as a particular class is concerned, or it may be merely difficult, in the sense that it calls for considerable skill in exposition and illustration.

The most satisfactory way of dealing with hard lessons of the first type is, of course, to leave them alone. Frankly to counsel such a course would seem at first glance very much like encouraging mutiny in the Sunday School ranks, but there are higher virtues than mere conformity, and amongst these is faithfulness to one's ideal of personal duty.

Naturally, the occasions when any teacher will need to use some other lesson than the one assigned are, or should be, very few. The conditions under which the Sunday School lessons are chosen would suggest the presence in all of them of considerable that is of value and interest for any class of the grade for which they are intended. The difficult lesson will be difficult merely, and not impossible.

The teacher's difficulties come first in point of time since he is the first to meet with the lesson as a lesson. His first task is always that of understanding the particular portion of scripture set for study, verse by

verse and word by word. An English dictionary which gives, along with the modern meaning of certain words, their older meanings, is often a valuable aid. Better still is a Concordance or a Bible Dictionary which gives the literal meaning of the original Hebrew or Greek of the difficult words or passages. Of course the Lesson Helps provided for practically all Sunday School teachers do a great deal in the furnishing of necessary explanations; but no editor, no matter how discerning he is, can put himself in the place of another person and forecast, with invariable accuracy, that other person's difficulties.

The mastery of the text itself is, however, only a part of any teacher's intellectual equipment for the effective presentation of the lesson in class; he must also master the context since frequently the text of the lesson is meaningless or misleading without some reference to verses that precede or verses that follow. For example, a recent International Uniform Lesson in the series consisted of some twelve or fifteen verses taken from the story of Balaam as found in the Book of Numbers. These verses are, as we know, but a fragment of the whole story, and, in the hands of a capable teacher, would be little