

The Junior Epworth League

Its Purpose and Possibilities

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ONE of the greatest problems facing the Church in the twentieth century is the problem of the child, how can he get hold of him, and keep him in the Church?

Old ideas regarding the child are passing away, and new methods are being used, new plans formed, and the children are taking their rightful place, not as "little men and little women," but as boys and girls whose personalities are to be recognized from the standpoint of the child's own outlook upon life.

We are beginning to realize that there is no need for our little children to wander away into the world when they are their way back, till at last they become children of God; but that they are already children of the kingdom, and that the duty of both parents and teachers is to see that they are so led and directed from babyhood, that none shall ever feel any other attitude towards God, than that of a son or a daughter.

Realizing that the child may grow up in this attitude towards God, we should prepare him for the time when he shall publicly declare his faith and be received into the Church.

As teachers and leaders we ask too much from children, if we expect them to see things from an adult standpoint. We must not forget that they are but beginners in the battle of life, and that it is the duty of the adult, who is in thinking of the child's best welfare to take his point of view, and with that as a basis, begin true constructive training.

Many children are growing up around us who are not in the church. Why is this? and how can we best induce them to enter: One great reason for the first fact is the lack of parental training.

Some parents are too tired with the day's toil to bother, others in the rush of many duties cannot spare the time, and some feel they have done all that is necessary for their religious training if they send their children to church and Sunday School, forgetting that while the Sunday School is doing a noble work, it is impossible in one short hour on Sunday afternoon, for any teacher to give all the training that is necessary to develop the highest Christian character in the child.

To supplement the work of the home the church provides its Catechism classes, Sunday School, Mission Bands, Junior Leagues, each of which has its own mission to perform in the formation of young life within its reach.

We will deal particularly with the Junior League, and see in part what are its purposes and possibilities.

Constitutionally, it is a part of the church and its purpose is to systematically train boys and girls under fourteen years of age in the doctrines of the Methodist church, help them study the Bible intelligently, and put the knowledge thus gained into practical use, live day by day as the Father's children, and devote themselves to a life of service for others.

To make the Junior League a success a superintendent must be provided who understands children and is willing to enter into their every day life. She must understand their aims, be glad with them in their joys, and prove herself a friend in their troubles. She should enter fully into their play, in everything look out on life from their view point, and above all be thoroughly consecrated to the Master's service with a heart full of love for the children. With such a leader what may not a Junior League accomplish?

Oh, the possibilities that are wrapped

up in a single child! Mischievous, fun-loving, frolicsome, may be, yet worth so much that Jesus said "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." And again, "Woe unto you if ye offend one of these little ones."

The aim of the Junior League is to supplement the Sunday School, by taking a broader field of work, and by entering more into the every day life of the child—physical, social, intellectual—and through these develop the religious side of his nature; it helps the pastor also by caring for the younger members of his congregation.

Having got the leader, the next thing is to get the members. To do this the parents and children should both be interested and made to realize that the Junior League stands for something worth while, and will always keep its standard high.

In dealing with children, we err by simply training them. We are dealing with living souls, not mere animals, each with a personality all its own, which needs development, and the leader who can by instruction and guidance help the Juniors to develop their own personalities has done more for them than years of mere formal training could possibly do. The leader's aim is, therefore, to get the children to do right because their Father gave them the freedom of choice, and they love to do his will.

In working among young children, one must also bear in mind the wonderful influence for good exerted by the proper use of the imagination, and place high ideals before them in the form of stories.

The little child lives in a world of make-believe. To him flowers and trees are people whom he makes his friends, so we must take all these things into account in our Junior League and provide accordingly.

Children cannot sit still very long at a time, for they have the spirit of ceaseless activity, and without being wearied they go from one thing to another the whole day long. In the League we must not forget the few minutes for play, for as some one has said, "Play is God's method of teaching children how to work."

In addition to a good leader, and members, a very important thing is the room or place where the Juniors meet. Much depends on the surroundings, so if it is at all possible have a nice, bright room, with pleasing pictures and a series of mottoes hung on the walls, and little home touches here and there to make it look cosy and inviting when your members come together.

It is very important that the leader be there to welcome the Juniors and in order to keep them from becoming restless before the time to begin arrives. Tell a bright little story or teach a new game, but be sure to begin the meeting on time, never wait for the tardy ones, but trying to make the whole session so interesting that if the early part is missed once, they will never want to miss it again.

Have half of the hour spent in study, which should be scriptural in its basis, but not confined entirely to scripture. In addition to the Bible study, have history, biography, poetry, and some character from a book that the children have read. Make the study hour a pleasure and help the children to discover new truths for themselves.

In choosing the Bible subject give the children a foundation, but let them build up the structure themselves. It would be

wise to give them home work. Do not let them feel that it is like something hanging over their heads all the week, but present it in such a way that they will be quite anxious to do it at home, and in fact, be quite disappointed if it is not given them to do.

Watch your meeting, and at the first sign of weariness have a change in the programme, either by introducing a motion song, physical drill, or recitation.

The service should be serious and of a spiritual character, but not dull. During the week let the children, especially the boys, feel they are needed. Give them something to do, and if you have nothing ready, invent something.

Make the Juniors largely responsible for the meeting. Superintend it yourself, but let the members act as chairman, fill the offices, or give little five minute or three minute addresses. Never mind if they do make a few mistakes, let the girls play the organ and it will be an inducement for them to do their best, as they feel they are needed somewhere and are really helping.

It is the leader's place to direct, the child's to do. At first the attempt may be crude, but it is surprising what a child can perform if he feels that someone has confidence in him. No matter how poor the first attempt may be, never make light of his efforts, but by kindly criticism and patient love help them over the difficult places. So as the years come, and your children grow to manhood and womanhood and take their places in life as ministers, missionaries, teachers, politicians, doctors, Sunday School superintendents, bankers, lawyers, working men and women, fathers and mothers, they will look back with more than grateful love to the leaders who had great faith in God and in them and who helped to lay the foundation of a Christian character and a useful life.

It was

Only an hour with the children,

Pleasantly, cheerfully given,

Yet seed was sown

In that hour alone,

Which would bring forth fruit for heaven.

The Mice Didn't Care

Little Dorothea is one of those children whose danger signal is silence. When she is still she is in mischief.

The other day her mother became aware of the quiet which boded trouble. She was about to look for the child, when at that moment, Dorothea came in, her face rosy with happiness and her mouth covered with crumbs.

"Where have you been, Dorothea?" asked her mother. "What are you eating?"

"Cheese," said the young lady, calmly.

"Cheese? Where did you get it, dear?"

"In the mousetrap."

"In the mousetrap!" exclaimed her mother, horrified.

"Oh, yeh!"

"But what will the mice do? They won't have any cheese."

"Oh, dey don't care, mamma! Dey was two mouffins in de trap, and dey didn't care a bit!"—Selected.

Harry's mother had given him an apple and told him to peel it before he ate it. Returning to the room after a few moments' absence, and seeing no peeling, she asked: "Did you peel your apple, Harry?"

"Yes," answered Harry.

"What did you do with the peelings?"

"Ate them."