

From the Child's Point of View

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What would the Sunday School hour be if all the exercises were considered from the point of view of the child? As we try to answer this question, there comes before us a group of happy little faces—faces without a mask, and that speak a message to all who are simple-hearted enough to read. Lacking the simple heart, we read imperfectly, or, reading, we are so wedded to custom that we do not obey. The little hearts are grieved. They ask for bread: we give them a stone. They seek the living kernel: we give them the withered husks. Instead of living pictures we present abstractions, instead of conversation we offer sermons or dissertations. This is not fault-finding but personal confession.

Have we not all heard a child pray—not in set or learned phrases, but in his own way? Was there ever such simplicity, such directness, such sublime faith? Honest, simple heart-talk it was, with no room for figures, and no necessity for multiplication of words: clear, definite, concise, genuine, with the charm of innocence added to its force and beauty. Over against it have we ever set our own prayers as Superintendents? We have meant it, yes indeed, every word; but it was our own prayer to God, and not a prayer the children could follow. Thought and language were beyond them. They may have felt we were talking to God, and that was a great thing; but it would surely have been more in keeping, if we had followed their wishes, and led them in the expression of their thought.

Have we not all marvelled at the wonderful patience of these little ones? We have seen them sit with bowed heads for five minutes, and they have not understood a single word, just as they may have sometimes listened to a preacher for forty minutes without grasping a single idea. Nor can we justify this by saying there is a spirit which is more than substance. No, no, the answer is plain. The school is for them; the exercises should

be suited to them. Thought, language, attitude, should all be such as they can comprehend. In the home, on the street, in the school, we willingly modify our phraseology to meet their needs. Why, in the worship of God, should we speak in an unknown tongue?

There are songs which children love because of the words, and songs in which they delight because of the musical setting. There are others, which, though beautiful in every way, have no meaning for childhood. It requires no extraordinary wisdom to discern what is suitable, profitable and interesting. All that is required, is for a superintendent to consult with the pupils and be guided in the main by their desires. Nor would this necessitate the abolition of the good old church tunes that time has endeared to all. It will be found that they are enjoyed as much as any, but they must be sung with a spirit and a meaning that speak reality.

For the Primary class, what better than these—all from our own Book of Praise—"When He cometh"; "Gentle Jesus, meek and mild"; "Jesus is our Shepherd"; "Jesus, tender Shepherd"; "Around the throne of God"; "Now the day is over"—and a score or two of this type? For older pupils a greater variety is possible, including hymns of praise, as—"O God, our help in ages past"; "I love to hear the story"; "The God of Abraham praise"; "Holy, holy, holy";—Evangelistic songs, as "Rescue the perishing";—hymns of trust, as "Rock of ages," "Oh love that will not let me go," and many other like hymns. Too great care cannot be taken in selecting suitable hymns Sabbath by Sabbath. The reward is certain, and will quickly appear in the zest with which the scholars take part in the service of praise.

What has been suggested as to prayer and song service, can be applied equally well to teaching, class management, choice of a library, and the visitation of the homes.