

If not, you must read the lesson once more, with a poet's imagination noting this time the difficulties which you strode easily over, but which would soon trip up little feet. When you write down such points on your paper, underscore them. And underscore them again. A vast deal of preparation for teaching is fruitless because it is made in the singular number.

The next stage in our lesson study will be to answer our questions. Points in regard to antecedents and motives will be answered by the chapters intervening between the last lesson and this. Those should next be read. Many difficulties concerning customs and laws will be cleared up by parallel passages and the references of your reference Bible. Those same references will collate for you helpful utterances on the ethical problems of the passage. Comparatively few people know, by the way, how nearly a reference Bible allows one to dispense with the Bible dictionary, Bible index, concordance, and commentary. I am continually astonished to see how few are the questions which may be asked about a passage that the Bible itself does not answer if closely scrutinized.

"But all this is a waste of time," you object. "In the lesson helps all of these points are stated and discussed, fully, methodically, concisely. Others have done this work for me, anticipating all my difficulties. Why need I repeat their labor?" Surely not merely to be original. There's too much original work crying to be done to waste a moment in duplicating unnecessarily work already done for us. But the Bible study cannot be done for you. It must end in familiarity with the Bible, in appreciation of it, in a wide-awake understanding of the problems it presents, to be obtained in no way except by original work. If difficulties are solved before we have felt them to be difficulties, if customs and phrases are explained before we have discovered the need of an explanation, and places located before we fall to groping after them, it is the old story of "light won, light lost." And so I wish to repeat that the one proper commencement of study of a Bible lesson is the Bible, and the Bible, and the Bible; once to note our own questions, once to imagine our scholars' questions, and once, in large measure, here, there, and everywhere, concord-

ance, index, references, and atlas at our elbow, to answer, if it may be, from the Book itself all the questions it has raised.

And when this is done, even if every question has been answered, open arms to the commentaries and the lesson helps, the wisest and richest you can find, and as many as you have time for. Why? Because twenty heads are better than one; because the Hebrew and Greek travel and debate and experience and insight and spirituality of our best thinkers will suggest new points of view, add a world of illustration, may even upset some of your conclusions. Stand sturdily, however, in the presence of these learned doctors. You will be tempted to throw away your own honest results and adopt their wise and brilliant homilies. If you do, your class will laugh at you, or yawn. You will be giving them, not your life, but your rhetoric. These helps are for inspiration, not respiration and circulation. They are for hints toward originality, not hindrances. They are useful in strengthening your own thought, vivifying your own feeling, confirming your own conclusions, opening new vistas for your own exploration, suggesting methods for your own practice.

If these two lines of preparation have been faithfully carried out, you will by this time have accumulated a mass of material which will be confusing, and the third step is to reduce it to order. Long practice has convinced me of the utility of the plan of writing out questions. Whether these questions are used in the class or not, they clarify the subject marvellously, and themere drill of writing them adds fifty per cent. to the teaching power of the instructor. When I began trying it, I was astonished to see how many thoughts which seemed to me quite promising and bright could not be approached by the interrogative mood. I wanted to lead up to this simile, that illustration, this theory, that pretty idea. I would soon find that my questions refused to lead up to them naturally. Why? Simply because these fancies answered no query likely to rise, solved no difficulty likely to suggest itself, and were mere adventitious decorations wherewith I had been accustomed to load my Sunday-school teaching, to show off.

My attempt at formulating questions soon taught me, too, that I had been indulging in