

to us. We can hardly be indifferent to these appeals, but if we should, the Master's interest is supreme and His commands, "Suffer the

children to come unto Me"; "Feed My lambs", have not been revoked.

Truro, N.S.

THE TEACHER'S TOOLS

By Amos R. Wells

III. HIS QUESTIONS

If a teacher had but one teaching tool (excepting, of course, the Bible), it should be the question. The question is the hammer of knowledge, driving truth home; its auger, exposing ignorance; its level, testing the understanding; its saw, rightly dividing truth. The question is a whole carpenter shop full of tools for the teacher.

Questioning is a fine art. Ask any lawyer what is the nub of his calling, and he will say, "A question." By questions he tests not only witnesses, but experiences, observations, appearances, documents. The art of life is the art of asking questions in an intelligent, purposeful, faith-filled way. What folly it is for a teacher to neglect this art!

To ask a good question you must get to the heart of the matter. If you wanted to question your class on the twelve baskets of fragments gathered up after the feeding of the five thousand, you would ask how much food was gathered up, and what sort of baskets they used, and what they did with the fragments after they had gathered them; but you have not asked the real teaching question till you ask, "Jesus could create bread for five thousand from almost nothing; why did He bid them take such care of the fragments?" That question leads you into the heart of reverence for all that is created—care for food, conservation of fuel and forests, care for health and life, charity, philanthropy, missions.

To ask a good question implies knowledge of the person of whom the question is asked, sympathy with him, insight into his character—in short, imagination. You must put yourself in his place, and ask the question in his language. It is not a true question till it is put in the way in which it would occur to the mind of the person questioned. You

must consider his range of thought and experience, and ask the questions in terms of that.

A good question will not be like a bare hook; it will be baited. For example, my question above was not, "Why did Jesus bid them take such care of the fragments?" I introduced the question with a little thought-provocative, the statement, "Jesus could create bread for five thousand from almost nothing"; and then went on with my query.

A good question, like a hook, should be snappy, pointed, sharp; as the boys say, it should "catch on." For example, my question given above would not be put in good form if I worded it thus: "Why did Jesus, who could create bread for five thousand from almost nothing, bid them take such care of the fragments?" That is too long. Children do not think in relative clauses.

A good question is not stiff and formal, but conversational and idiomatic. I know a teacher whose questions never seem a part of himself, but are delivered impersonally. This teacher would say, "In what consists the sinfulness of covetousness?" A good questioner would be likely to say, "Well, now, I'd like to know where the wrong of coveting comes in—just exactly where?"

Many otherwise good questions are spoiled because they are anonymous. The teacher does not fire at any one of the pupils. When a good teacher asks good questions every bullet has its billet. Of course, for the sake of briskness, you will sometimes provoke concert replies; but always the bulk of your questions will be directed at individuals.

Even the best form of a question must not become a fetish, or it will grow to be as stiff and useless as all fetishes are. Employ all kinds of questions, even leading questions