

## Increasing the Membership

### Tested Principles and Methods

A normal Epworth League chapter is in constant need of new members, and this for two reasons. In the first place there will be a gradual withdrawal from the active work of the chapter of those who have been longest connected with it. They will become more and more advisory, and, in a sense, honorary members, giving their active service to the other interests of the Church. Their places must be filled by the coming in of new members.

In the second place an Epworth League chapter is essentially a missionary organization. It is not to be content with interesting and helping those who are already enrolled on its record. Like the Church itself the chapter must go out among those who have not yet been reached, and enlist their interest and their co-operation, in order that it may win them to the highest standard of Christian experience in life.

Where are the new members to be found? The comprehensive answer is, everywhere. The fourth department should let no opportunity escape of learning the name and the location of every probable recruit. Strangers coming into town should be visited at the first possible moment. There are already many young people in the community who are frequently at the League meetings, no doubt, but have never been asked to join. Some members, by reason of their association in business or school with other young people, can make out lists of special classes, clerks in stores, the young men in factories and business houses, young women who are in business or domestic service, students of all the educational institutions in the neighborhood, and other classes.

There are two other most important sources of supply. First, the Junior League. The Junior League members are very rapidly growing up. Every year many of them are ready to leave the Junior ranks. Do not let them be lost to the young people's work at the time when they feel themselves too old for the Junior League. It would be a glorious thing if every Junior League chapter could arrange for an annual graduation, and if it could be understood that entrance into the membership of the Epworth League is as much a matter of course as is the going from the primary department into the older classes of the Sunday-school.

Second, the revival. Wherever young people are being converted and forsaking sin and turning to God, there is a fruitful field in which to secure new members for the Epworth League. Should the Epworth League be particular concerning the new material it gets? Yes and no. There should be no "rushing" of members, no throwing out of the drag-net merely in order to get as many members as possible. And yet the ideal aim is to secure every young person in the community who is not already affiliated with some other young people's society.

This aim is not to be sought simply to get a big membership list, but in order that the real purposes of the Epworth League may be accomplished both in and through the young people.

The work of canvassing for new members has no special seasons. It can be carried on continually, although there may be times when a special effort is both possible and desirable. The chairman

of the fourth department who desires to make a success of this part of the work will look carefully over the territory. Members of the committee will be assigned to such special districts or special classes of young people as may best secure the end desired. Some will be assigned to make a canvass of Sunday-schools. Every member of the Sunday-school who is of proper age should be in the Epworth League chapter. Special attention ought to be paid to the young men's class, and to the young people who are already members of the church.

Sometimes good results are secured by asking one member, or a club of members, to aim at securing a certain definite number of new members—three, or five, or ten.

Membership contests have been tried with very excellent results in many chapters. Their use should be safeguarded very carefully, however, in order to prevent the employment of questionable methods during the contest, and a reaction and consequent lack of interest when the contest is over.

Wherever the pledge is used let the chapter be quite as eager to secure associate members as it is to secure active members. Associate members are well on the way toward complete acceptance of all that the League stands for, and it is a mistaken policy to keep down the number of associate members. But, of course, it is to be understood, always, that associate membership is not a permanent arrangement. An associate member should be satisfied to be a probationer, and should not be willing to keep on as an associate member permanently in that relation.

The work is not all done when the new members have been elected and have signed the constitution. They are yet to be "broken in," and on the experience of their first few weeks in the chapter will depend very largely their enjoyment of the new relation and their usefulness in the chapter's work. The very best place to complete the work of strengthening the chapter's hold on its new members is the devotional meeting. In that meeting the fellowship idea and the fellowship fact must be made prominent and satisfying. There should be abundant opportunity tactfully given to the new members for participation in the meeting. When necessary this may be done gradually, and by indirect methods. Do not make the mistake of asking an inexperienced and shy new member to take the entire responsibility of conducting a devotional meeting the week after he or she has been received. Use such methods in the devotional meeting as will make it possible for the more backward and bashful to take some part at the very outset.

An important element in making new members feel at home is that they should be provided with some definite share in the work. No person who is satisfied to be a member of the chapter at all need be without a congenial and useful share in its activities.

The new member will be a little hesitating at first. No stranger enjoys making advances toward better acquaintance. The chapter members must see to it that there is prompt and cordial recognition of new members at every possible opportunity. The welcome which they receive at the various meetings should be, if anything, a little warmer than that which is accorded to the older members. If

possible, little distinctions and marks of special consideration should be shown until they begin to feel thoroughly at home in their new quarters.—Ep. Herald.

### Concerning Personal Evangelism

We are beginning to learn that it is a mistake to confine our attention to the crowd. Religion is so intensely personal and individual that, no matter how general a spiritual movement may be, each person has a separate, distinct relation to it. Every case of conversion is the conversion of an individual. You cannot save the masses, or the lower classes, or the higher classes, or the submerged tenth, or the other convenient rhetorical groups of people. You must save men and women one at a time. This was the method of the Master. His greatest message, His most careful ministries, and His most successful labors were all for the benefit of the individual.

Another lesson we are learning is that there is no such thing as salvation by machinery. Boards, committees, societies, brotherhoods, leagues, and all the rest are exceedingly useful, but none of them is a substitute for personal service in behalf of the individual. No one can escape the responsibility indicated in the story of the Good Samaritan by sending a check to the secretary of the Society for the Relief of Distressed Travellers on the Jericho road.

All this means that the Epworth League purpose, to try "to help others to attain the highest New Testament standard of experience and life," must be accomplished largely by personal work. Personal Christian work is not easily done. It is, perhaps, the most difficult form of Christian service. But at the same time, it is the most valuable form richest in benefits to the worker, and in results. It requires a measure of personal spiritual life that is not so markedly demanded by any other form of religious work. One can do so many things in connection with the Church and the Epworth League without possessing the highest and most definite personal experience. But the work of seeking others, and dealing with them face to face concerning their salvation, cannot be done when the spiritual life is at low ebb.

In the first place, then, the personal worker should seek the fullness of the Christian life for himself. Then, there must be the most complete and most unquestioning dedication of his powers to this work.

Avoid denunciation or positive statements concerning particular sins. Leave these to the conscience, as it is enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

Never try to do personal spiritual work in a crowd.

Use simple language, and avoid as much as possible those stereotyped phrases which everybody recognizes, but which have ceased to convey any definite meaning. Do not argue. Seek for points of agreement rather than points of difference. Be free to make use of your own experience.

As much as possible confine your work to those of your own sex and age.

Urgent prompt decisions are required. When decisions have been reached, there is great need for care, and the following up of each individual case. Do not drop the acquaintance when the first great purpose of your work has been accomplished. You have saved only brought a soul to Christ, but you have won a friend. Offer all possible help in the beginning of a new social life. Enlist the co-operation of a few warm-hearted, congenial Christians. Secure your new-found friend as a member of the League, and set him to work at once at some definite Christian task.—Epworth Herald.