

Growth cannot be ordered off-hand. It comes from Father Time's shop, and he is a deliberate workman. You will lose your hold on your class if each Sunday hour does not begin with you a little above them, and end with them at your level. This advance cannot be won Saturday night, or during the space between the first and second bells for Sunday-school. Such a spasmodic leap ahead will leave you too much out of breath even to tell them to come on.

Dropping metaphor, of which we may have had too much, there are several substantial reasons why the Sunday-school preparation should extend over the seven days of the week. Thus only can you utilize in the Master's work odd bits of time, your Bible on the bureau while you dress, in your hands on the street-cars or while you wait for the meat to be cooked. There are many Bible verses which should be carefully committed to memory in connection with each lesson, as the teacher's best reliance for commentary and inspiration. These verses should be running through our heads as we run on all our six-day tasks, and should sing themselves to all our labor-tunes. But chiefly, it is only in this way that we can accumulate hints, and grow into the truths of the lesson by experience. With the lesson theme for a nucleus, it is astounding to see what a wealth of illustration, of wise and helpful comment, each day's living thrusts upon us. Every event is a picture of some truth which needs only a sensitive plate to be photographed forever. That sensitive plate is a mind which is studying that particular truth.

How much time do you spend in studying your Sunday-school lesson? You see that no true teacher can answer that question, any more than the poet can tell how long he is in writing his poem. This is the inspirational part of the teacher's work, and not the mechanical part, and his brooding will have issue of life just in proportion as the Holy Spirit dwells in his heart. But along with this lofty work must go lower processes, of which it is far easier to speak. I mean those lower processes which alone we are likely to call "studying." Permit me to lay down a programme for the study of a Sunday-school lesson which, it is hoped, teachers will find in some measure helpful.

To begin with, let it be always with pencil in hand. You have seen iron filings scattered in rough confusion over a sheet of glass. And then, when the magnet was placed beneath, you have seen those ugly bits of metal dance into the daintiest designs, fairy curves and most symmetrical figures. Such a delightful magnet is a pencil or pen for all the disordered thoughts and fancies of our brains. Next to the Bible, the Sunday-school teacher's inseparable companion should be a lead pencil.

What book is nearest you while you study your lesson? Teachers may be classified finally by their answers to that question. Is it the commentary, the atlas, the Bible dictionary, the concordance, the question-book, or the Bible? If the commentary, your comments will fall fruitless to the ground. If the atlas, your class will wander nowhither. If the Bible dictionary, your diction will have no issue in deed. If the concordance, your class will know little from you of that concord which passes understanding. If the question-book, the value of all your study is at least questionable. No; let me emphasize this statement: *Not a single lesson help should be touched until everything possible to be learned about the lesson from the Bible directly has been learned.*

For this you will need two Bibles at least, one to be kept open at the lesson, one to turn back and forth in pursuit of references and information. The first must be a King James reference Bible; the second, the noble translation of Victoria's reign. Thus furnished, read the lesson. As you read, examine your mind. What questions assail it? Those moments are full of matter. Those questions are the clues to the lesson labyrinth. Those perplexities constitute your programme. "I wonder where this place is?" you will say to yourself. "Who was this man, and what was his past history, that he did this deed? What does this odd phrase mean? Is that sentiment a just one? Is that act a model for us modern folk?"

As these difficulties come up in your slow and thoughtful reading, jot them down, and the resultant half sheet of scribbling means half the work accomplished. But hold! Did you read through a child's eye as well as your own? Did you read in the plural number?