

The Devotional Department: Is it Proving its Value

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You have seen and so have I, the organized class with great possibilities and large hopes, become content with its so-far development, and simply endeavor to hold its own, when a harvest of might-be new members was near. Content with its own, even they soon were not, for they had ceased attending.

Like Byron, the officials have ultimately asked: "Where are they (our members) and where are their many country, (my class)?" *Why is this?*

You have seen, and so have I, the strong class with its able teacher, Sunday after Sunday meet and discuss every historical detail in and around the lesson, and congratulate themselves on having a really profitable time—but have they?

You have seen and so have I, a vigorous president, who, on Sunday or for the monthly business meeting has had a score of business matters relative to the membership committee, social, literary, musical, athletic, and finance; but has he struck the vitalizing problem of the class, that department which insures permanency in the class?

All these departments of class work are important, but they are not yet, nor ever can become, the genuinely permanent life force in any class. What then, is the most important department in our organized classes?

In how many of our organized classes to-day, is the devotional committee really doing its duty, or is the work of the devotional committee being done or even attempted with any degree of faithfulness? I know two or three classes where this work is being done, but it is in your class? Now please answer this question, not to me, but to your own best, active Christian.

Dear reader, will you spend at least fifteen minutes each day this week and talk with God on the problems of the devotional work of your class? Be assured that He will show you where, and when, and how, you can start quietly, but efficiently, to organize for some definite evangelistic work in and among your fellow class members.

I do not yet know of any live, glowing class where every member is a Christian and a member of some Christian church. Do you? I would be sorry to find any class where every member and attendant was a professed Christian and a church member, unless the last word of the reception service had just been spoken, for I have yet to find a men's class in any church or community where every man is a Christian, and I have yet to find a church with a wholly Christian feminine population within an easy attendance radius.

Reader, please don't read the rest of this page until you have stopped a moment and thought on the seriousness of your responsibility. Is there not someone in your Bible class whom you may win for Christ and His church, and if all there are within the fold, then we'll may you and your fellow members rejoice, but listen, "a harvest fully ripened, rich and golden lies in view," and "there is a work to do for Jesus" just outside your church door, and it has been waiting, oh, so long, for someone to do it—will you?

Winning a man for Christ and the church, may not prove quite so generally popular an effort among your class members as winning a game of tennis, or being the champion debater, or the best runner, but I have won them all and whether I won or lost in the latter efforts

matters but little ten years from now in the life of the class, in my life or in yours, but where I was in the soul-ender and through His grace, it has meant a man for Christ, yesterday, to-day and I hope, forever.

I would not for a moment minimize the other departments of effort and I would not lessen the energies in these other avenues, but by all means available and without delay, let us place the devotional work, real evangelistic and missionary work on the higher plane of activities in our classes. Then, and only then, will there be that permanent benefit to the individual members, to the Sunday School of which we should always form an actively co-operating part to the church, which will soon feel the throbbing of a new life within itself, and to the community wherein higher ideals and standards of morals and conduct must inevitably develop. And there will be rejoicing all heaven over every sinner that repents.

The Organized Bible Class

Secret Service

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The Secret Service includes private prayer, personal service, and daily meditation on God's word.

Men are peculiar animals. They are hard to drive, they are not easy to lead. Yet, they are easier to lead than to drive. When intelligently and tactfully led, they will sacrifice anything, dare anything, and endure anything, for the cause they have espoused. Garibaldi, Italy's great hero, was a born leader and he so led his "red shirts" that they were ready to die for him and the cause he championed.

The first thing needed then is a leader for our men's adult Bible class. Almost everything depends upon this. With a wide awake, intelligent, concentrated leader, the class will become a strong evangelistic force in the salvation of men.

The leader must know men. For this he must mingle with men. In the railroad coach it will not hurt him to sit in the smoker. He may not like cigar smoke, and of course as leader of the Men's Class, he, himself does not smoke. He may run the gauntlet when he arrives home, for as soon as the front door is opened, he is greeted from the other end of the house with, "where on earth have you been, you smell like a bar room!" Forthwith everything of his wearing apparel, that cannot be washed, is dangling on the reel in the back yard. In spite of all that, a smoker is a good place to brush up with men, and to study reading and thinking and interested in. If your leader is a "Lodge" man he has a good chance there to study the habits and character of men. Now, don't be afraid of the word "Lodge." Men like "Lodges," they enjoy a "secret" society; and moreover men belong to them. Let your good men like our Adult Bible Class leaders to belong to and to influence these societies. These men need to be taught "the more excellent way,"—they need to learn that "other foundation can no man lay." The Bible satisfies the deepest longings of men's souls. Let our leaders find out the needs of men and he can then know how to meet them.

Can your Leader go where men are at work? To ride in the cab of a railroad engine, or to sit on the box in a baggage car, to wade through the gore of a packing house with its noise and its smells, or to walk through the mill with its whirring of machinery and its dust and chaff, to

enter offices, factories, foundries, stores, is a great privilege to the leader, and is a great opportunity to do work for our Master. A word here, a cheer yonder, an invitation there, brings its results.

Athletic clubs, athletic concerts, show up human nature and furnish a wealth of illustration for teaching. Here he gets information first hand. All the time he is doing this he is getting a grip on men. Did not even our Saviour say: "Away he went to the farm, to the fisheries, to the customs house, to feasts, and banquets, to the slums, to the villages, to the cities, to temples and synagogues. Wherever there was a man to study and help Jesus went, there to study and help him. His power was great then, for men left government jobs to follow Him. They left their business, forgot about their dinners, and some gave up all to follow Him. His power is as great to-day. He still mingles with men. He goes about in every servant of His, doing good.

"Be strong; We are not here to play, to dream, to drift. We have hands to work with, and loads to lift. Shut out the struggle—face it; 'tis God's gift."

The object of all this endeavor is to win men for Christ. You will see men drink, you will hear them swear, you will hear folk talking and see lives blighted by vice; and sometimes your heart will sicken at what is seen and heard. Wrongs undreamed of before, will confront you. Man's inhumanity to man will surprise you. Man's ingratitude to God will surprise you. But you will not wonder after it, why Jesus died of a broken heart. Like Him, you too will yearn after men. Your whole soul will burst with pity and love for them. Until it does, no man will be saved by you. *Wear your endeavor to save only those whom we know need a Saviour.*

Then comes the hand to hand struggle with men. It is easy to talk with a man about personal salvation? Try it. Don't be discouraged. Perhaps your first man will point out a "sample" of Christians. And of course the sample is a bad one, and an unfair one. These poor "samples" of Christians are such a hindrance to our Master's work. Paul was so jealous about our Master's fair name that he even called two women's names out in church, that they quit their quarrelling and make up with each other. He urged the church to settle its disputes among themselves, and not be a laughing-stock among the heathen. He urged upon men and women purity and temperance. I would that we had all good witnesses of Jesus. But we are not asking men to accept the poor representation of Christ that men offer, we are asking men to accept Christ. His enemies found fault with Jesus, but not even his enemies could find fault with Jesus. Make our Adult Class an agency for salvation, and every Christian in it a worker.

We see men going down hill, and all about them there are agencies to help the downward progress. They need no help to go down, yet plenty of help is given them. But to ascend the heights means effort. It means struggle, and help must be given. To aid men in the holy struggle upward is the aim of the Men's Class. Fear not their rebuff, or misrepresentation, or a sneer. These things are cheap and are therefore common. Our Master is more interested in this work than we are, and he has assured us success and His presence always.

I knew the post mark and the handwriting on the envelope, so I hurriedly wrote it open wondering what it contained. As I read the letter I knew it was from the very soul of a young business man. "All that I am I owe to you and the men's Adult Bible Class, and now I come once more to you for help. Last week I was appointed superintendent of our Sun-