Articles by Robert Swatosh

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The Year End Program (1961, Vol. 7 No. 11)

From Food for the Flock, 1961, Vol. 7 No. 11. Parts of this piece could not be read in the scan.

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The subject should definitely be about the Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, but should also include His Life, His Atoning Death, and His Resurrection, or the complete Gospel story. There is no other theme which affords such an excellent opportunity to present the complete Gospel, not only to the children but also to their parents. The subject can be built around a Scripture such as Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government shall be upon His shoulder: And His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Songs and recitations can be assembled and grouped in the orderly sequence of the Scripture. In addition there is much material available in the various Bible stories which can be used for the program. The important thing is to have a subject planned in logical scriptural order which can be easily followed by the listening audience, and which will make a lasting impression.

The program proper should be limited to approximately one hour. This is about the longest period of time the children will maintain any semblance of order and the parents will continue their interest. Anything longer

than this may detract from the initial impact of the Gospel story, creating unrest and inattention.

Once the theme of approach has been established, a meeting should be held with the teachers and assignments of responsibility made on an orderly basis. This should include procurement of material, arrangement of the program, typing or printing work, seating arrangements, food and any other important things which must be handled. This meeting should be held to provide sufficient time for good preparation.

When the material has been secured, it should be assigned to the children, giving careful attention to the age of each and to his capacity and talents. The assignments should take place early in November to allow time for the children to properly memorize their recitations, and for rehearsal. The material can consist of poems, Scriptures, songs, acrostics, visual aid skits, or dialogues with appropriate objects to emphasize important truths. Care should be taken to avoid over dramatizing and thus detract from the message of the program.

The program should be planned to proceed orderly and smoothly from part to part without interruption. To announce titles and names for each part is to cause unnecessary interruptions and loss of time. Rather than have separate announcements, program sheets can be printed in detail giving all this information, and supplied to the audience. The children should be prompted by the teachers when it is their turn to give their recitation so delays will be kept to a minimum.

Rehearsals should be held preceding the program. This gives the children a broad understanding of the entire

program and helps them to firmly fix their own part in their minds. Scriptures or scriptural poems learned in this manner are often retained for many years. It also provides a smooth flow to the program so that, when given, the parents will be impressed with the message or theme rather than with any distractions or interruptions which could occur without rehearsal.

The use of the piano can help a great deal with the singing. Small children can be helped to the extent that all the words can be understood. Under other conditions the time can be lost because of some children being too fast or too slow or off tune. The net result of this is to cause the audience to laugh rather than understand the message in the words.

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Effective Sunday School Teaching (June 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 6, June 1961.

To know our sins are forgiven is not to be the end of our Christian experience. By the use of this wonderful knowledge, we are to fulfil the command of our Lord Jesus Christ, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). We should bring this vital information to others, remembering that such ministry carries the promise of a reward at the Judgment Seat of Christ. The role of the Sunday School teacher is a most important part of this preaching of the Gospel.

The well-equipped Sunday School teacher should not only have a thorough knowledge of the Word of God, but should also have the ability to give clear and effective expression to the truths in the Word of God. It is not necessary to have the ability to do this before large audiences; it is sufficient to be able to express oneself before a class of small children.

The influence of the Christian teacher, through the ministry of the Word of God and good sound Christian literature, reaches tremendous proportions. Once this is recognized, the teacher’s objective should be to use this influence effectively upon others. This needs intelligent and spiritual training. The Gospel, along with basic scriptural truths, must be taught the children efficiently.

Much has been written and said about the necessity of real spirituality in the life of the teacher; this cannot be underestimated. There are, however, some very

fundamental essentials which should be briefly reviewed in order to improve our efforts in the Sunday School.

What is Teaching?

As we carefully think about the art of teaching, the verb “to teach” seems to take on a deeper meaning. We use many words freely and often without always fully realizing what they mean to others. Some words have more than one meaning, and must be understood in the light of their connection. There are many examples of this, one of which is the word “custom.” Sometimes this word means a usual practice, a course of action, a convention. In other connections it means duties, taxes, tolls, the costs imposed when importing goods from another country. Still again, it may mean, in another context, that which is specifically prepared for one person, such as having something custom-built. The idea of teaching, therefore should be examined carefully so that we may know just what it is.

Just telling something to the children is not teaching. No child learns everything that he hears. No child is taught unless he learns something at the same time. If we adults were to have learned all the truths that we have been told, we would of all people be the most learned. Telling is an important part, but it is not in itself teaching.

Correct answers to our questions and the proper recitation of memorized portions of the Scriptures do not mean that the children have been well taught. Children often fasten in their memories words which to them have no particular meaning, or perhaps even a wrong meaning. Children who learn to recite from memory may do so without deriving any spiritual

benefit. Correct answers and properly quoted Scriptures are very important, but they alone do not constitute teaching.

Effective teaching is not a matter of eloquent language or of putting together words in nice sounding phrases. Technically speaking, teaching consists of conveying the exact thoughts and knowledge of the teacher's mind to the minds of the children until they become a part of the children's understanding. In teaching, the exact meaning as understood by the teacher must be conveyed to the scholar.

In simple words, to teach is to cause to learn. Teaching includes learning. Teaching is a part of a two way process of which one part is learning. There is no effective teaching where there is no real learning. In teaching, knowledge not known to the learner is directed to his mind; in learning that very knowledge is made the learner's own. Every sincere Christian Sunday School teacher wants to be an actual teacher, and not a teacher in name only. This is our objective in all of our Sunday Schools. There are some very definite and practical things which we can do to accomplish this objective.

General Preparation

Special preparation for a given lesson is necessary, but of greater importance is a general preparation. A good overall knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, and understanding of their doctrines, and an understanding of their language, as well as a knowledge of the words and phrases most adequate to explain these to the children are vitally important.

A sound basis of Scripture is a prime requisite. The way of salvation; the apostles' doctrine which is described as the whole body of revealed truth, the faith; the memorization of significant passages; the location of important texts; and a general awareness of prophecy with respect to current events is necessary knowledge for the teacher. Timothy was told, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

An extensive reading of the Bible and of sound expository works alone will be of no avail in obtaining a good general knowledge for the purpose of teaching. The reading must be done with accuracy and understanding, with thought and meditation. All such exercise, furthermore, must be done with the Sunday School class in mind. It is better to do one's reading on a regular study program, taking notes and building up a store of general knowledge. The memorization of the Scriptures which are significant and which support key truths is most important. These things should be stored in the mind, ready for use when needed. As an aid to the memory, index cards may be used.

It is not enough that the teacher have a good general knowledge of the Word of God. He should have command of a suitable language with which children today are familiar in order to express biblical truths.

We must know the meaning in general of scriptural words; and, likewise, the language with which the children are conversant so that we can readily transpose from the one to the other. One of the parables of the Lord Jesus as translated in the King James version starts

out, “A sower went forth to sow.” Without a proper explanation and transposing of language a modern child might think that someone was about to sew clothes.

Everyone, even including children, has two languages, two vocabularies. One consists of those words which one reads and understands; the other consists of those words used in conversation. The development of a vocabulary suitable for this special work should be a definite objective.

It will be wise, first of all, to study the words used in the Bible. Psalm 12:6, says, “The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” Three principles are helpful in determining the meaning of words used in the Bible, their derivation, their use in general writing or conversation, and their specific use in the Holy Scriptures. In addition to these helps, an expository dictionary of New Testament words will provide an excellent service. A persistent effort should be made by the teacher to utilize every aid possible.

As we speak to children, there is not a great deal of time to carefully choose words and construct sentences. We ought to attend to the lesson and to see that it is properly taught. However, we must be able to readily switch over to a style of speech suitable for the class. This is just like a change of clothing to suit the different activities in which we take part. As we have suitable clothing in our wardrobe to suit different activities, so we must have developed a ready and suitable language for our classes. This style must of necessity spring from our own basic everyday language to be easily usable,

therefore, it is, of course, important that our daily conversation be beyond reproach.

The choice of words and illustrations to be used with the children should be such as will accurately convey the truth of the Scriptures in the age level of the class, and must be well within the range of their knowledge and experience. This knowledge of children's words can only be gained from the children themselves. We all have association with children in one way or another, either as younger brothers and sisters, relatives, or our own. From these associations, and from experience gained in our Sunday School class, we can build up a vocabulary which will accomplish the purpose.

The Art of Questioning

"A question should exercise the pupil's judgment, and not simply test his memory. When only the memory is tested and pupils repeat by rote what they have verbally memorized, teaching becomes mechanical and devitalized …

"A judgment is the mind's assertion about reality. This it is that knits truth into the intellectual fibre of the pupil's being, that assimilates the knowledge received. As unassimilated food means physical indigestion, so unassimilated knowledge means mental indigestion; and when the habit of not thinking is persisted in, mental dyspepsia results, and solid mental achievement becomes impossible."

—Horne.

Special Preparation (July 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 7, July 1961.

“The preacher because he was wise sought out and set in order many proverbs.” The importance of specific and careful preparation of every Sunday School lesson cannot be overlooked.

There are many lesson aids and manuals available and in use today; while most of these are helpful, the teacher must learn how to use them in order to make them effective.

The Truths

In beginning the specific study of a lesson, one should determine the divine truth to be emphasized. In a lesson on David’s deliverance recorded in 1 Samuel 17, emphasis should be given to the fact that Christ is a greater deliverer from a greater foe than Goliath. Our presentation should be planned to accomplish this purpose.

We must consider the subject for the lesson carefully, and prepare an approach by methods which will appeal to the children. The Scripture text should be read fully to include the complete context. The lesson aids may then be read and the important points memorized.

Finally, in our study we should make the lesson a part of ourselves. It should be so absorbed that the original words and expressions become part of our own thinking. Then it will be spoken in our own vocabulary, developed especially for the children.

Many speakers outline their speeches in order to present them orderly, logically, and in accordance with the predetermined plan. This practice will be helpful for the Sunday School teacher. An outline should be brief, containing in order short statements which suggest the logical order.

The specific truth to be taught should be developed in the light of the knowledge and experience of the children. Expressions should be used which convey most accurately the lesson to the class.

Each significant statement should be supported by Scripture correctly quoted, with chapter and verse. This presentation of the living Word of God takes the truth out of the realm of “Teacher says so” to “God says so.” This makes a most important impression upon the children.

The Attention

The presentation of the lesson to the children should be interesting enough to capture their attention. Attention is more than silence, more than hearing, or looking. Attention requires the giving of self, the application of the mind in order to perceive. Illustrations, adventures, the desire to win a prize or recognition, and the promise of other types of rewards are all forces which influence children to listen.

It is beneficial to plan an introduction that quickly catches the imagination. This is what should be placed in our preparation and outline.

The Presentation

It is easy to sell to those who want to buy, and it is easy to teach those who want to learn. The problem is to teach those who have no interest, and this is usually the case in the Sunday School. It was indicated that there should be at the opening an interesting statement to arrest the attention. Before this opening there should be a call for attention, a looking for order, and an item to arouse the interest and curiosity. The first statement should be made so that all can hear. It may be a question, a promise, or a recitation of the memory verse.

Repeating the memory verse in unison with the children, and then calling for volunteers to recite it alone is an excellent way to fix it upon the mind. As the lesson unfolds, the teacher will explain the meaning of the verse and its place in the lesson. At any sign of unrest, the verse can be repeated, and someone asked to recite it from memory.

Having launched the lesson successfully, the teacher must simply and earnestly with proper emphasis tell the lesson story. The old hymn says:

“Tell me the story simply,

As to a little child.

Tell me the story slowly,

That I may take it in.”

We must use words which the children understand, and illustrations from those things he sees everyday. Our facial expressions and our voices should convey the feelings of the lesson story: sadness, happiness, concern, anger, tenderness, and love. Anyone who ever has attended a Sunday School class, and has listened to

a teacher telling, with tears, about the sufferings of the Lord Jesus on the cross, can never forget the lesson or the effect it had upon the children. Even the most rowdy class of boys will melt at the sight and the sound of a lesson taught in such a manner.

The Questions

Questions usually test the knowledge of the child. They can also encourage the children to participate in the lesson; this, because of the desire for approval. Questions should be asked about important points, and comments made. This procedure will command attention and interest, preparing the children for fuller explanations. Questions should provoke thought rather than answers merely by rote.

The Reviews

A review of previous lessons can provide continuity, and at the same time provide the opportunity to repeat the truths already covered. Repetition is a basic method of study to fix knowledge in the mind. Without reviews, things once known can be easily forgotten.

Influence and Love

The influence of a teacher is another very important factor. Influence produces an effect without apparent force or authority. Prestige arises from the position of a higher station. To possess prestige and to exert influence one must behave in a manner that will create respect for the teacher and reverence for the Word of God. A good influence causes the children to recognize the teacher as someone in authority; it produces the desire to do what is asked. By it the teacher expresses

his love, and it enables him to be more persuasive in winning young souls to Christ. Christian influence is formed within the heart and upon the personality by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Finally, and most important, is the expression of real love for the children. This cannot be feigned; it must be real; the kind of love that moves to compassion when the heart realizes that each little person in the class has a soul that will live forever. Christian love is an avenue through which the love of Christ shines, and through which the message of divine love in the cross of Christ becomes powerful. The teacher's prestige, influence, and love should be manifest in every lesson period.

Some may feel that they would like to be a teacher just like the one discussed in this paper, but, sensing their own inability wonder how this could be brought about. The Scriptures state: All things are possible to them that believe. Dale Carnegie said in his famous book, "How to Win Friends and Influence People,": "If you really want to achieve a higher station in life, start tomorrow morning to live and act as though you had already reached the higher position, and eventually you will acquire the ability and confidence needed." With the help of the Lord and with a true desire and determination, let all start at once toward the objective of teaching effectively in our class and of winning young hearts for the Lord Jesus.

The Year End Program (Nov 1961)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 7 No. 11, Nov 1961.

There are a number of ways to have an annual year end program. It is always beneficial to review some of the approaches in planning a program for the coming year. Let us consider features which have proven to be successful in the past.

We should first analyze the reason we want to have a program. We should determine the objectives we want to accomplish. What are the results which we really want to see when we have a program? It is important that we clearly understand our objectives so that we can properly lay our plans to gain the results desired.

The spread of the Gospel and the salvation of precious souls are, of course, the prime and great underlying purposes of a program. There are different ways to bring these about. Two major factors are involved. The first, naturally, is the children, and the second, the parents of the children. For the children we will want to further impress the Word of God upon their hearts. We will also want to reward them for achievement and attendance, and provide an incentive for the future. For the parents we want to bring the Word of God before them, show them what we teach their children, and create an atmosphere of welcome which will make them want to return for other year end programs.

The Program should, naturally, be at a time that assures the greatest interest and attendance. The closing week or so of the year is the period when the children and

their parents have spiritual things brought to their attention more than at any other time.

This is when they are most receptive to the story of the Birth of Christ, and this is when many of them will not only come but will also listen. Many parents as a result of all they have seen in the papers, heard on the radio, and seen on television will come, some hoping perhaps to hear answers to questions which have been brought to mind. To gain further assurance of good attendance the program can be held on a Sunday evening in place of the regular Gospel meeting. There are other attractions or duties on the week nights during the holiday season, but on Sunday night there is very little interference of this nature. The program can be preceded by a buffet supper for the parents and refreshments for the children.

The program should be an assembly effort. While the children and the teachers play an important part in recitations and singing, the rest of the Christians should be present to help in serving the food, and to welcome the parents. This will display the warm interest of the Assembly, and create an environment which will encourage them to return.

The subject should definitely be about the Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, but should also include His Life, His Atoning Death, and His Resurrection, or the complete Gospel story. There is no other theme which affords such an excellent opportunity to present the complete Gospel, not only to the children but also to their parents.

The subject can be built around a Scripture such as Isaiah 9:6: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government shall be upon His shoulder:

And His name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Songs and recitations can be assembled and grouped in the orderly sequence of the Scripture. In addition there is much material available in the various Bible stories which can be used for the program. The important thing is to have a subject planned in logical scriptural order which can be easily followed by the listening audience, and which will make a lasting impression.

The program proper should be limited to approximately one hour. This is about the longest period of time the children will maintain any semblance of order and the parents will continue their interest. Anything longer than this may detract from the initial impact of the Gospel story, creating unrest and inattention.

Once the theme of approach has been established, a meeting should be held with the teachers and assignments of responsibility made on an orderly basis. This should include procurement of material, arrangement of the program, typing or printing work, seating arrangements, food and any other important things which must be handled. This meeting should be held to provide sufficient time for good preparation.

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important truths. Care should be taken to avoid over dramatizing and thus detract from the message of the program.

The program should be planned to proceed orderly and smoothly from part to part without interruption. To announce titles and names for each part is to cause unnecessary interruptions and loss of time.

Rather than have separate announcements, program sheets can be printed in detail giving all this information, and supplied to the audience. The children should be prompted by the teachers when it is their turn to give their recitation so delays will be kept to a minimum.

Rehearsals should be held preceding the program. This gives the children a broad understanding of the entire program and helps them to firmly fix their own part in their minds. Scriptures or scriptural poems learned in this manner are often retained for many years. It also provides a smooth flow to the program so that, when given, the parents will be impressed with the message or theme rather than with any distractions or interruptions which could occur without rehearsal.

The use of the piano can help a great deal with the singing. Small children can be helped to the extent that all the words can be understood. Under other conditions the time can be lost because of some children being too fast or too slow or off tune. The net result of this is to cause the audience to laugh rather than understand the message in the words.

The use of a microphone even for small children makes it possible for everyone in the audience to clearly hear even those words spoken very softly. This, of course,

requires the assistance of one person to handle the “mike” and another to handle the volume controls.

Another desirable feature is a “prompter.” This is a person seated unobtrusively and very close to the platform with a complete detail of every recitation. On the night of the program the child who hesitates will be given the next word quickly and quietly without delay so as to avoid embarrassment to the child and to the parents. This action will also help to eliminate any distraction from the message of the recitation and from the Word of God.

Singing is always effective, but when done in parts by a group of young people it often provides one of the most interesting items of the program. Audience singing is almost always well accepted by most of the parents, generally even those unsaved seem ready to participate heartily in the singing of Carols.

At the completion of the recitations by the children, one of the most unique opportunities is presented to bring the Gospel home personally to the parents and older children. A speaker gifted for this type of work can very briefly emphasize the message.

If yearly awards are made to the children at this time, they should be handed out directly after the program by the individual teachers. It should be announced to the parents that such awards have been earned by the children for attendance at the Sunday School during the past year, for Scripture memorization, and whatever other accomplishment may be involved.

Last, but most important, we must remind ourselves that the Lord Jesus said, “Without Me ye can do nothing.” This program will be of no effect in gaining our

objectives without the direction and blessing of the Lord. Moses said, “If Thy presence go not with us carry us not up hence.” This must be our feeling with regard to the program. It will be of no avail if the Lord is not in it. Therefore, every step must be taken prayerfully, and every consideration measured in the light of the Word of God.

The annual program can be a time of real blessing and witnessing for the Lord.

The Attendance Program (June 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 6, June 1962.

One of the most significant facts with respect to Sunday School attendance is that it does not stay at a given level without continuous effort. Children leave by moving out of the neighbourhood, by growing too old, or for other reasons. If no new children come to the Sunday School, then, gradually and eventually, it will grow smaller and smaller.

The natural desire is to increase the attendance in our schools, but the plain fact is, if we are to maintain the same number of children in our Sunday Schools that we have today, we must practise a program of recruiting new children on a continuing year-round basis. In New Testament times the disciples went about from place to place and thus contacted new audiences at each new location. In one of the parables in Matthew's Gospel, we are told the master of the house had his servants go into the highways and byways to compel men and women to come in. We, likewise, must continually search for new audiences, and go out into the neighbourhood to get the children to come.

There are three specific appeals we can make. The first is to the children now in our Sunday School; the second, to new children; and the third, to the parents of children not now in our School. In each case the appeal must be consistent and direct in presenting the significant motive that will produce action on the part of the children and the parents.

What makes a child want to come to Sunday School? Why do parents send their child? The proper answers to these questions should give us an important key in our approach to the appeals which we will make to improve regular attendance.

Those in Our School

A child may come to the Sunday School because he enjoys the class, the rewards, and the year-end programs, but primarily he will come because of the teacher. Class interest and the other factors are, of course, very important, but a teacher's personal attraction over his class can only be measured in terms of his love for them. Therefore, the initial appeal to children for their attendance on a continuing basis, and for their help in bringing others, comes directly and forcefully from the teacher. To be successful in any measure with attendance, the teacher must demonstrate a love for the children in his class. This must be to the extent that it will influence the children to come regularly and to make them enthusiastic about bringing other children with them.

In this atmosphere of loving interest, the teacher, the superintendent, and the workers can launch programs with the children. Rewards can be offered to the children for every new child brought to the Sunday School. Contests with prizes for those with the best records in bringing new children may be used by each class. This appeal will help to hold the present children, and will put them to work appealing to their friends and classmates in the community day school.

Those Outside Our School

There must be a direct appeal to the children not in our Sunday School. This must be done by a visit to the homes of the parents and by the distribution of invitations in the surrounding neighbourhood. A personal visit to the homes of prospective scholars provides a first-hand acquaintance with someone from the School and with someone who is actually demonstrating a love for them. This work can also be accomplished by distributing invitations near the regular day schools as the children leave in the afternoon. Such contacts provide an opportunity for firsthand acquaintance with them.

The written invitation to be distributed, briefly can explain the Sunday School, the programs, and the rewards. It can also be used to advertise special programs, children's meetings, rally days, and other special events, all a part of a continuous program to appeal directly to the children not now in the School. The specific details of the special events aimed at increasing the attendance are important and should be carefully planned and executed as announced.

The Parents

Parents will want to send their child to Sunday School probably because they recognize that he should have what they consider religious training. Most will want also to be assured that the school chosen is not a new cult or something unusual in religion. They want the teaching to be along the lines with which they are generally familiar. This, of course, applies usually to those parents who have no firm religious connection, and, as a result, have no predetermined place for their

children to go. Actually, it is to this type of parent that you will have the greatest appeal. Generally there is not as much success with those who have a strong feeling about their religious connections.

The best approach in the appeal is, of course, the direct visitation by the Sunday school worker to the parents. The distribution of invitations is good and does have results, but the personal visit is the strongest approach. Whether we visit or pass out invitations, there are certain things that should be stressed. We should emphasize the need for spiritual enlightenment, and mention some of the important by-products of the Sunday School which may appeal to the unsaved parents: such things as building moral character, good citizenship, and a sound knowledge of the Bible.

Programming

The implementation of these appeals is important. Every detail should be carefully considered. There must be enthusiasm, attractive material, real interest, and love on the part of the workers. There are many kinds of programs, contests, and methods which have been outlined in publications from time to time. The primary purpose of this article is to emphasize the necessity of a well-defined continuous program on a yearly basis with an appeal to the children at present in the Sunday School as well as to those outside, and to the parents.

To make such a program effective, someone should be appointed to supervise the whole plan. If possible this person should not have a class, and should not be the superintendent of the Sunday School. He should be free to devote his efforts to this task. First, the teachers, and every one in the Assembly who can be of assistance

should be organized to take part in the labour that goes along with special events like children’s meetings, vacation Bible Schools, summer camps, rally days, and the other programs.

Spreading the Gospel (July 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 7, July 1962.

The scriptural injunction is, “Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Our Lord himself travelled about speaking to many. The early Church “went everywhere preaching the Word.” Thus we have the command and example to spread the Word of God and the Gospel. To build a nice hall or chapel with fine Sunday School facilities, turn on the lights and then expect the unsaved to drop in, is not completely obeying the command, or following the example which has been given to us. In the early days printing was not available to the extent that it is today. Therefore the spread of the Gospel was accomplished totally by preaching. This is, of course, good, and we should not abandon visiting the homes and telling others about the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. However, printed material is available today and provides us with a powerful and effective means of spreading the Gospel to a great many. A small group of twenty or thirty can place the printed message and a Gospel invitation in two thousand homes in approximately one hour. We can also make it known that we do have a meeting place, that there are Gospel services, and that we have a Sunday School in which to teach children about the Lord Jesus.

A Continuous Effort

Telling others about the Lord Jesus is a continuous effort. This is something we do as part of our new nature. We do not turn it off and on from time to time. In the same manner it is important that the distribution of

Gospel tracts and invitations be done on a regularly scheduled basis during the year. There are also times when we will want to advertise special meetings, children's meetings, vacation Bible school, summer camps and other specific events. But the important thing is that our friends in the surrounding neighbourhood receive regular invitations to our Sunday School, our services and programs. In this manner they will be continually reminded there is a Christian Assembly in their midst, and perhaps they will some day come and visit us and send their children to our Sunday School.

The Immediate VIcinity

It has been said of some Assemblies that the people in the immediate neighbourhood were unaware of their existence. Surely it is important that we first spread the Gospel in our immediate vicinity. A reasonable area to start with is one square mile. In a large city this will provide about two thousand homes. If the Assembly is in a rural area, then it may be necessary to select a larger section in order to establish a sufficient number of homes for the distribution effort. Later on, the work should move into the outer periphery of this first in order to get a broader coverage and avoid useless repetition. The response to a broad distribution effort such as this may be a small percentage. However, if out of two thousand invitations to special meetings one percent or twenty people came to the meetings, this surely would be well worth the effort.

Proper Planning

Scripture tells us that everything should be done decently and in order. Distribution work is a work for the

Lord and demands the very best of our thinking and planning. First, someone should be selected to be responsible for the distribution effort of the Assembly and Sunday School. Next, the district to be worked should be broken down into smaller sections of about four hundred homes. Captains should be appointed to be responsible for each of these sections. In turn, the captains should recruit individuals for his team on a permanent assignment basis. Whenever the distribution is planned, the announcement should be made in the Assembly. The captain should personally contact each member of his team to assure the presence of sufficient people to do the job. He should assign the streets his helpers are to work and obtain the proper number of invitations and tracts. The captain must be responsible to see that his section is thoroughly covered with material at each home.

Sometimes it might be desirous to have refreshments after the distribution work. This provides a little time for fellowship and a season of prayer for blessing on the printed word.

Work for Everyone

This distribution effort is one in which almost everyone in the Assembly can participate provided their health permit. No special skills are required, and the more people that take part, the larger the area covered. In establishing the teams, the captains can take the Assembly list of Christians and check each name to be certain that every one is invited to participate.

Sound Material

The printed material itself must be carefully written to clearly explain whatever message is to be conveyed. Someone in the Assembly who has a gift for this type of work should be assigned this responsibility and should work with the printer to obtain the most attractive material available at reasonable cost. Gospel tracts should be given with the printed material. This provides another opportunity to spread the Gospel.

If you want to obey the scriptural command to spread the Gospel, if you want to see your Sunday School grow, and your Family Hour increase in attendance, then this is one means by which you can move in the right direction. The Lord has blessed efforts of this kind in the past. If the work is undertaken prayerfully and with the direction and power of the Holy Spirit, there is no reason to believe that it will not result in blessing, in increased attendance, and in the salvation of souls.

He Hath Done All Things Well (Aug 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 8, Aug 1962.

The miracle of healing the deaf and dumb man in Mark chapter seven, not only illustrates the story of salvation, but also unfolds the deep and troubled concern of the Saviour for the children of men, and demonstrates the perfectness of His actions. It was on His return from the coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon, and on the eastern Galliean shore, that He was met by a man deaf and dumb. His frequent journeys had taken Him many weary miles for meetings such as this one. He has been called a “Seeking Saviour” and once said of Himself that He “came to seek and to save the lost.” Even when we were cold and reluctant toward Him, He sought us out to save us. He seeks us today to minister to our every need, and our needs are many and varied. There are needs of every day living. There are the needs of the unusual problem and circumstances which come into our lives on occasion.

“He Took Him Aside”

The Saviour took the afflicted man away from the noisy and curious group of people who surrounded them. He gave this man the full and undivided power of His personal attention. Our medical doctors of today provide us with privacy and it is a real relief to be alone with someone who will give the full and undivided attention of his wisdom and skill to our immediate distresses. To be alone with God! What a luxury of joy it brings to the Christian! Our first experience was that moment we

shall never forget, when as though face to face, we met the Saviour and accepted Him as Lord and Christ. Deep spiritual experiences occur when we are alone with God. Moses was given the law when alone with God on the mountain top. Jesus expounded “all things” to His disciples in Mark 4:34 when they were alone. When we are deaf and dumb with our sorrows and our failures, and our lack of faith, He will take us aside and restore our communion and our joy.

“He Put His Finger in His Ear”

The next action by our Lord was to put His finger into the man’s ear and to spit, and touch his tongue. The woman who touched the hem of His garment apparently was undetected until Jesus said, “Virtue hath gone out of Me.” The dramatic touch of the Saviour brought sympathy, and transmitted virtue and power directly to the afflicted part. The finger of God denotes His power and His working and this is demonstrated in this miracle. He is ever ready to reach out to us in power, and to touch our infirmity, and to work against the sin that so easily besets us.

“He Looked Up”

In Scripture, “looking up” indicates the attitude of prayer. After touching the afflicted man Jesus looked up to Heaven. He could say, “I and My Father are one.” The communion between God the Father and God the Son is so evident in the significant “look up” to Heaven. When raising Lazarus from the dead, Jesus lifted up His eyes and prayed, “Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me.” Here is the acknowledgment of oneness and an illustration of communion with the Father. Today Jesus is

in Heaven at His Father's right hand "ever living to make intercession for us." This is a blessed truth. The One who saved us from our sin is our Advocate with the Father, and the One who intercedes for us in the presence of God.

"He Sighed"

The word sigh used in the Scripture means to groan or an inward unexpressed feeling of sorrow. In Hebrews 13:17 this same word is translated "grief" when referring to the feeling of those elders who must give an account for souls, when they cannot do so with joy. In Romans 8:23 this same word is translated "groan," "We ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of our body." A sigh is not even a word, but an expression which conveys a depth of meaning in fatigue, grief, sorrow, or relief. What pathos, tender sorrow, sympathy, and love are expressed in the sigh of our Lord Jesus! What personal concern is shown as He looks upon the effects of sin in this man, and as He thinks upon its effect in the world! Perhaps He also looked forward to the cross when His Holy Sinless Person would bear the effects of this sin, and experience the awful depths of the wrath of God against sin to be poured out upon Him. This is the One who sighs perhaps even now as He looks down upon our sorrows, tears, and lack of faith and who makes us the objects of His tender compassion. This thought is a compelling motive to submit ourselves to Him, and not to cause Him grief.

“He Spoke”

The sign of DIETY! He spoke and it was done. He created the world by the word of His power. He said, “Ephphatha” or “Be opened,” and the dumb spoke. This is an Aramic word in the imperative mood, a word of command. There is no request here. This is an order. The miracle was accomplished, and “the man’s ears were opened and the string of his tongue was loosed and he spake plain.” In Ephesians chapter one we are told the exceeding greatness of His mighty power to usward who believe is that power which raised Christ from the dead. Who can imagine the working of His mighty power in overcoming Satan, the prince of the power of the air. Here is the thought of power which in our greatest imagination we might consider with the great power of the nuclear hydrogen bomb! But this power is from the One who created the Heavens and the Earth and originated the sources of power which man is rapidly discovering today. The source of the power which raised Christ from the dead is available to us. Let us use it in our lives.

“He Hath Done All Things Well”

The testimony of God the Father is, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” The people who witnessed this great miracle said, “He hath done all things well.” Surely, an amen to this exclamation rises from our own hearts. We have a Saviour who will take us aside, deal personally with us, touch our infirmities and afflictions, and who makes intercession for us with God the Father. He is One who sighs over us with compassion and tender sorrow, and heals our many troubles by the

Word of His power. Surely, “He hath done all things well.”

The Move (Mar 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 3, Mar 1963.

Shall we move to a new location? This is the question that has arisen often before an Assembly of Christians in recent years. But first, what causes such a question to arise? Several years ago at Central Gospel Hall in Detroit, this question came up and required an answer.

There were several reasons for this question, one of which was the movement of most of the Christians further out in the city to more desirable locations. But of primary consideration, was the apparent indication that the Sunday School could no longer effectively contribute to the growth of the Assembly as it did in the very early days. Since the Assembly is in large measure dependent upon the Sunday School for continued growth, it would follow that the Assembly numbers could gradually grow less, and perhaps it would eventually close. Thus the importance of the Sunday School in the Assembly was brought sharply into focus at a very early point in the question of a move.

The neighbourhood where Central Gospel Hall was located had changed. Being close to downtown Detroit, it became transient in character to some extent. Many times children moved with their parents to a better neighbourhood and were, therefore, lost to the Sunday School. Economic differences developed between those who lived in the neighbourhood and those who were in the Assembly. Those who were in the neighbourhood preferred to attach themselves to a local “church” made up of their friends and neighbours.

And so the question did come to Central Gospel Hall, and was subjected to much waiting upon the Lord and to many discussions in the Assembly. The result was that all appeared to be of “one mind” that a move should be made, and that it appeared to be the leading of God Himself.

Where shall we move? Naturally there were many important factors to consider; one of which was the cost of such a move. But the more important question was “where?” Again the significance of the Sunday School in the Assembly was clearly emphasized. The new neighbourhood should primarily be a place where there were lots of young children who would come to our Sunday School, and after salvation be baptized, and eventually become a part of the Assembly. Many districts were surveyed and again there was much waiting upon the Lord, many discussions in the Assembly, and a great deal of interest and effort by the Christians in the Assembly.

Out of all this the district where Curtis Gospel Chapel is now located seemed to possess the characteristics that were so necessary. The neighbourhood appeared to have many young children. There was an old building on the lot which had been in use as a Baptist Sunday School, and had the promise of a small nucleus of children with which to start a new school. The costs involved appeared to be within the limitations of the Assembly. It was centrally located for most of the Christians. In addition, the Central Gospel Hall building had been sold, answering the question of “when.” In the absence of undesirable factors, it appeared the Lord had clearly led to this district.

Now the Sunday School again was to see itself in a major role, as the question of how to make the move came to the forefront. There was a building on the premises at the new location which had been, and could now be used as a Sunday school. While architectural plans were laid, there would be a period of time the building would be vacant. Should we start Sunday School on a temporary basis; discontinue it during construction of the building, and then resume it in the new building? And what about the Sunday School at Central Gospel Hall? Would we just walk away from the children we had learned to love and who had been under our teaching for so long? Again there was the necessity to wait upon the Lord, and again the leading came which seemed so clear and which proved to be so correct.

It seemed reasonable that, since there was a building upon the lot and several months of use available, we should go ahead and start a new Sunday School with the thought that even if the children did not return when the new building was finished, we at least could tell them about the Lord Jesus. It just seemed unreasonable not to take advantage of this opportunity. So the neighbourhood was carefully surveyed and laid out in sections. Leaders were appointed for each section. Invitations were printed, and a large number of the Christians turned out to pray and to pass out the invitations in the new neighbourhood. The Lord blessed this effort, and many children came, and the Sunday School work got off to a nice start.

The matter of having two Sunday Schools at the same time was handled by having two separate organizations, each with a superintendent and teachers. The necessity

of extra teachers was met very nicely by Christians volunteering to meet the need.

Next, we faced the problem of the Sunday School at Central, and it was basically only a Sunday School problem. Once the adults moved with the Assembly, there would be no adults left behind. But this was not so with the children from the neighbourhood. This matter was resolved by the group that purchased the old Central Gospel Hall. They were fundamental in character and, while the children were invited to the new Sunday School, at the same time, we invited them to continue to come to the same location so they at least would hear the Gospel. The final Sunday School program was held in December 1956, and we said farewell to the majority of the children at that location. The Lord had provided a means which reduced our fears and our concern for the children.

The next concern was with the new Sunday School in the new building. Obviously, the Christians would automatically come to the new place, but what about the children who had come to our temporary Sunday School? Would they come back? Once again this was a matter which was mainly peculiar to the Sunday School workers. Again the distribution and visitation took place in the district, and again it was with much prayer and much help from all the Christians in the Assembly. Finally the day arrived, and then the hour, and our new little friends from the temporary Sunday School began filing in the door and taking their places with us in the new Sunday School. With thankful hearts we could look back and see the hand of the Lord in guiding us throughout the move from the one location to the other.

Today, the text at the front of the Chapel says, “Let The Lord Be Magnified.”

Like graduation ceremonies at our regular schools, however, this was really a commencement exercise and represented the beginning of our work in a new location. This is actually what takes place in “going into all the world to preach the Gospel.” It is the location of an Assembly in an area to preach the Gospel and reach the unsaved, while at the same time practising the principles of a New Testament Church gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus.

In looking back, two facts were dramatically brought to our attention. One was the highly important part the Sunday School plays in the Christian Assembly. The other one was the definite direction provided by God Himself in answer to prayer.

It has been said that the Sunday School is the largest gathering of the unsaved to hear the Gospel, and surely this is true in most instances today. Many of the denominations put such emphasis on the teaching of children that they develop their educational systems at great expense. This should impress the Sunday School workers in our Assemblies of their importance in the Lord’s work. It should also impress the leaders of our Assemblies with the necessity of providing godly leadership in Sunday School work.

This experience should also impress us with the fact that God can and does provide leading and guiding in a definite and unmistakable manner—“Let The Lord Be Magnified.”