

# **THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER'S GUIDE**

By John Angell James, 1816

"He who wins souls is wise."

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# **The Sunday School Teacher's Guide**

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## **The OBJECT which Sunday School Teachers should ever keep in view as the ultimate end of all their labors.**

To the success of any exertions whatever, it is necessary that the object to which they are to be directed, should be distinctly understood. Any confusion on this point, will be attended with a fluctuation of design, and an imbecility of endeavor, but ill calculated to ensure success.

There is just ground of apprehension, that many who are engaged in the work of Sunday School instruction, are but imperfectly acquainted with its ultimate end.

It is to be feared concerning some, that in giving their assistance to this cause, nothing further enters into their view, than communicating to the children an ability to read and write. In the estimation of such people, these sabbath institutions seem to rank no higher than the ordinary schools, where the offspring of the poor receive the elements of the most common education. Provided therefore they can assist their pupils to read with tolerable facility, and especially if they can teach him to write, they attain the highest object of their desires, or expectations. How will such teachers be surprised, when I inform them that the top-stone of their hopes is but the foundation of their duties; and that the highest elevation of their purposes, is but the very beginning of the ascent, which leads to the *summit* of the institution.

I admit that where no higher aim than this is taken, though very far below the proper mark, much benefit is likely to accrue to the children themselves, to their immediate connections, and to society at large. Where no effort to form the character, and nothing more in fact is done, than simply to communicate the art of reading, a vast advantage is

conferred upon the children of the poor. It is the testimony of inspiration "that for the soul to be without knowledge is not good," and the whole history of man confirms the truth of the remark. The very first rudiments of knowledge, independently of any systematic attempt to improve the character, must have certainly a moral tendency. In the very lowest elements of education, the soul experiences an elevation, and however it may be precipitated back again by the violence of its depravity, begins to ascend from the regions of sense. Ignorance debases and degrades the mind. It not only enslaves the intellect, but dims the eye by which the human conscience traces the natural distinction between right and wrong. "On the contrary," says Mr. Hall, "knowledge expands the mind, exalts the faculties, refines the taste for pleasure, and in relation to moral good, by multiplying the mental resources, it has a tendency to elevate the character, and in some measure to correct, and subdue the taste for gross sensuality." From hence it is obvious, that the very least and lowest end which, as Sunday School teachers, you can propose to yourselves in your labors, is fraught with benefits to the interests of the poor. I wish however to remind you, that simply to teach the art of reading, *is* the least and lowest end you can contemplate.

Others, as the ultimate object of *their* efforts, connect with the rudiments of knowledge, considerable attention to habits of order, industry, and morality. They are most laudably anxious to form the character of the children, so as that they may rise into life an industrious, orderly, and sober race. This is of vast importance, and subordinate only to what I shall afterwards propose as the ultimate end of all your endeavors. Much of the peace, comfort, and safety of the community depend upon the character, and the habits of the poor. If society be compared to the human frame, they are the feet and the hands, and how much do the ease and welfare of the whole body depend upon the healthy state of the extremities. To tame the ferocity of their unsubdued passions; to repress the excessive crudeness of their manners; to chasten the disgusting and demoralizing obscenity of their language; to subdue the stubborn rebellion of their wills; to render them honest, obedient, courteous, industrious, submissive, and orderly—should be

an object of great desire with all who are engaged in the work of Sunday School instruction. It should be your ceaseless effort to reform the vices, to heal the disorders, and exalt the whole character of the lower classes of society, by training up their offspring in "whatever things are true; whatever things are honest; whatever things are just; whatever things are pure; whatever things are lovely; whatever things are of good report." Then, to use the beautiful imagery of the prophet, "instead of the thorn, shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar, shall come up the myrtle tree."

Pleasing and important as such an object really is; delightful as it is to produce in the bosom of a poor man a taste for reading, together with a habit of thinking; and thus teach him to find entertainment at home, without being tempted to repair to the ale-house; delightful as it is to bring him into communion with the world of reason, and help him, by the joys of intellect, to soften the rigors of corporeal toil; delightful as it is to teach him to respect himself, and secure the respect of others, by industrious, frugal, and peaceful habits; to assist him to become the instructor of his own domestic circle, and thus to raise him in their estimation; in short, delightful as it is, to strip poverty of its terrors, and render it at least respectable by clothing it with moral worth—this of itself, and alone, is far below the ultimate object of your exertions. Higher even than this you must look for the summit of your hopes. A man may be all that I have represented; he may be industrious, orderly, moral, and useful in his habits, and still after all be destitute of "that faith and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."

Addressing you as believers in all that revelation teaches concerning the nature, condition, and destiny of man, I must point your attention to an object which stands on higher ground than any we have yet contemplated. It is for you to consider, that everyone of the children, which are every Sabbath beneath your care, carries in his bosom, a SOUL as valuable and as durable as that which the Creator has lodged in your own bosom. Neither poverty, ignorance, nor vice, can sever the tie which binds man to immortality. Every human body is the residence of an immortal spirit,

and however diminutive by childhood, or dark by ignorance, or base by poverty, or filthy by vice the hovel might appear, a deathless inhabitant will be found within. Every child that passes the threshold of your school on a Sunday morning, carries to your care, and confides to your ability, a SOUL, compared with whose worth the sun is a bauble; and with whose existence time itself is but as the twinkling of an eye.

And as these poor children partake in common with you in the dignity of immortality, so do they also in the degradation and ruin of the fall. The common taint of human depravity has polluted their hearts, as well as yours. They, like you, in consequence of sin, are under the curse, and stand equally exposed to everlasting misery. To them however the gracious scheme of redeeming mercy extends its blessings, and indeed by the express provisions of the gospel charter they stand first among the objects to whom salvation is to be presented; "for the poor have the gospel preached to them." Denied neither the privileges of immortality, nor the opportunity of eternal happiness, so neither are they exempt from the obligations of religion. Without the duties required in your own case, in order to eternal life, *they* will never possess it. Faith, repentance, and holiness; or in other words, regeneration, justification, and sanctification, are as indispensable in *their* case, as in yours. Their danger of losing all the rich blessings of salvation, unless great exertions be made to instruct and interest their minds, is imminent, and obvious. Dwelling in those walks of life where sin, in its most naked and polluted form, spreads destruction around—corrupted by their neighbors—nursed and nurtured in vice, in many cases by the examples of their parents—in manufacturing districts, inhaling the moral contamination with which the atmosphere of almost every workshop is laden; how rapid is the growth of original corruption; how luxuriant the harvest of actual transgressions which springs from it—how little likely, without extraordinary efforts, are these unhappy youths, to enter "the narrow path that leads to eternal life."

Such are the children which flock every Sabbath to the schools where you are carrying on the business of instruction. Look round upon the crowd of *little immortals*, by whom you are constantly encircled every week; view

them in the light, which the rays of inspired truth diffuse over their circumstances; follow them in imagination not only into the ranks of society, to act their humbler part in the great drama of human life; but follow there down into that valley, gloomy with the shadows of death, and from which they must come forth, "those who have done well, to everlasting life; but those who have done evil, to everlasting shame and contempt," and **while you see them plunging into the bottomless pit**, or soaring away to the celestial city, say, what should be the ultimate *object of a Sunday School teacher's exertion?*

You are now quite prepared to assent to my opinion on this subject, when I thus state it. The ultimate object of a Sunday School teacher should be in humble dependence upon divine grace, *to impart that religious knowledge; to produce those religious impressions; and to form those religious habits, in the minds of the children, which shall be crowned with the SALVATION OF THEIR IMMORTAL SOULS.* Or, in other words, *to be instrumental in producing that conviction of sin; that repentance towards God; that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; that habitual subjection in heart and life to the authority of the scriptures, which constitute at once the form and power of GENUINE GODLINESS.*

Here then you see your object, and you perceive that it includes every other in itself. To aim at anything lower than this, as your last, and largest purpose; to be content with only some general improvement of character, when you are encouraged to hope for an entire renovation of the heart—or merely with the formation of *moral* habits, when such as are truly *pious* may be expected, is to conduct the objects of your benevolence with decency down into the grave, without attempting to provide them with the means of a glorious resurrection out of it. To train them up in the way of sincere and undefiled religion, is an object of such immense importance, that compared with this, an ability to read and write, or even all the elegant refinements of life, have not the weight of a feather in their destiny. And the truth must be told, that wherever a religious education is neglected, **the mere tendency of knowledge to the production of moral good, is, in most cases, very lamentably and successfully counteracted, by the dreadful power of**

## **human depravity.**

Sunday Schools, to be contemplated in their true light, should be viewed as *nurseries for the church of God*; as bearing an intimate connection with the *unseen world*—and as ultimately intended to people the realms of glory with "the spirits of just men made perfect." To judge of their value by any lower estimate; to view them merely as adapted to the perishing interests of mortality, is to cast the institution into the balances of atheism; to weigh them upon the sepulcher; and to pronounce upon their value, without throwing eternity into the scale.

**THE SALVATION OF THE IMMORTAL SOUL**, a phrase than which one more sublime, or more interesting, can never drop from the lips or the pen of man, describes your utmost, and noblest purpose.

In what way this object is most likely to be obtained remains now to be considered.

### **1. Labor to impart to the children, as speedily as possible, a very correct method of reading.**

This is the first thing to be attended to, and as it is the basis of all which is to follow, it should be done *well*. Considering an ability to read, as I do every other part of Sunday School tuition, as a means for the production of spiritual and moral good, I view it as of immense importance that the children should be rendered as perfect as possible in this initiatory art. Reading is a powerful auxiliary to the progress of piety and virtue, but it is attractive only when it is performed with facility; and therefore to allure the children to the pages of revelation, or the perusal of other good books, it is necessary to render their access as smooth as possible. If they have often to *spell* a word, and still oftener to pass by a word which they *cannot* spell, they will either be much impeded in their instruction, or perhaps give up the matter in utter despair. If they do not acquire a tolerable facility in reading while they are at the school, few have the courage, the confidence, or perseverance, to pursue a course of self-tuition after they leave it. It is of vast moment therefore

that you should take peculiar pains in this preliminary step of a religious education of the children, in order that they may feel all that inducement to read, which arises from the consciousness of being able to do it with ease and correctness. I am apprehensive, that admonition is exceedingly necessary on this head, and that very many of the scholars leave our institution, most lamentably lacking in this very ground-work of instruction.

**2. You are to seek the great object of your labors, by a course of religious instruction, judiciously adapted to the capacity of the children.**

I take it for granted that the business of every school is so arranged, as to allow to the teachers a sufficient opportunity for explaining, and enforcing the principles of religion.

And here I think it right to remark that, as the very groundwork of religious instruction, it is of vast importance to produce, even from its commencement, a sort of trembling **reverence for the authority of Scriptural revelation**. From the time a child is capable of receiving a sentiment on religion, he should be made to feel the obligation of the word of God upon his understanding and conscience. The first idea which should be communicated to his mind, and which in every subsequent stage of education should be nursed and nurtured into a conviction inseparable from all his moral feelings, is that *the bible is and must be true*; and that however singular, however beyond the range of our experience, or however miraculous any of its facts might be; and however incomprehensible are some of its doctrines, still they are *all to be implicitly believed, because they are declared in the word of God*—so that one of the earliest, and strongest associations of their minds, shall be formed between truth, and everything contained in the holy scriptures.

From the beginning they should be instructed that all *our* reasonings, and views, and feelings, are to be brought into subjection to the inspired volume; and that from this authority, in matters of religion, there does, and can lie no appeal. In order to this, the evidences of revealed truth should be laid before them in a familiar manner; and even

before they are capable of estimating the weight of proofs, we should endeavor to produce a powerful presupposition in behalf of the bible. The reason for my insisting so much on this, is a conviction, that among the lower classes of society, there is a great deal of that low and ignorant skepticism which is produced in minds incapable of reasoning, by ridiculing facts that are beyond their experience, and truths that are above their comprehension. There is a sort of practical and vulgar infidelity, which, like a spider amidst the gloom and filth of a hovel, weaves its toils in the dwellings of the poor, and who, in consequence of not being well grounded in the persuasion that the bible must be true, whatever corrupt minds may say against it, often fall into the snare, and become its hapless victims.

What, therefore, I enjoin, is to endeavor that the children's minds may be so rooted and grounded in the conviction of the truth of revelation, that when a profane and artful opposer of the scriptures shall attempt insidiously to shake their faith, by ridiculing any of the facts or sentiments of the sacred volume, they may shudder at the insinuation, and retire instinctively to the shelter of this immoveable prepossession, *the bible must be true.*

Let it be an object of solicitude with you to impart in your pupils a correct view of the **leading truths of revelation**. You know how to treat the insinuation, that the doctrines of the gospel are quite unnecessary in the instruction of children, and that their attention should be exclusively confined to its moral precepts. Explain to them the moral attributes of the great GOD; his holiness as opposed to all iniquity—his truth as manifested in the accomplishment of his word—his mercy which inclines him to pity the miserable. Teach them the purity of his LAW as pronouncing condemnation on a sinful thought. Endeavor to make them understand the exceeding sinfulness of SIN, as breaking through all the obligations imposed upon the conscience by the majesty and goodness of God. Strive to lead them to a knowledge of the total corruption of their nature, as the source and spring of their actual transgressions. Unfold to them their situation, as under the wrath of God on account of their sins. Show them their inability, either to atone for their guilt or renovate their nature. Lead them to CALVARY,

and develop the design of the Savior's death as a sacrifice for sin, and teach them to rely upon his merits alone for salvation. Direct them to the HOLY SPIRIT as the fountain of grace and strength for the renewal of their hearts. In connection with this, lay before them all the branches of Christian DUTY; those which relate to God, such as faith, repentance, love, obedience, and prayer; and those which relate to man, as obedience to parents, honesty to their employers, kindness to all. Enforce upon them the obligations of public worship. Particularly impress upon them, that genuine religion, while it is founded on a belief of God's word, does not consist merely of abstract feelings, or occasional duties, but in a principle of submission to the revealed will of Jehovah, implanted deep in the human heart, pervading the conduct, and spreading over the whole character, so as to form a holy, moral, useful, happy man.

Such are the topics which you are to illustrate to the children; unquestionably the most important which can engage their attention. Much however depends on the METHOD you adopt for explaining them.

Of course, you should allot a portion of time to the work of *catechism*. The experience of all ages bears testimony to the utility of this plan. If well improved, it affords a most favorable opportunity for communicating religious knowledge. To accomplish this end, it is necessary that you should do more than simply ask the questions, and receive the answers as they are ranged in the book. To arrest and engage the minds of the children, who consider it generally as nothing more than a school exercise, you must descend to *familiar explanation*. Every answer should be regarded as a text, which, by a few plain short remarks, you should illustrate to their understanding, and enforce upon their conscience. It would be found an excellent method to explain one sabbath, what is to be committed to memory during the week, and repeated as a task the next. As we always learn with greater ease and pleasure what we understand, this would facilitate the business of memory, and at the same time, through the power of association, would perpetuate the ideas of the judgment, by enabling the children to recall at home, what then had been taught at school. This would prepare them for examination, which

should always take place when called upon to repeat the answers which had been previously explained.

It would greatly aid the business of religious instruction, if the children were encouraged to *commit to memory* hymns, and portions of the word of God; especially the latter. The measure and the rhyme of poetry, have attractions which, without great care on the part of the teacher, are likely to induce a preference for hymns. The inspired volume, however, should be elevated in their estimation above every other book. The very *words*, as well as sentiments of revelation, have a power and energy, which the language of uninspired authors, however scriptural their opinions, does not possess. Divine truth, expressed in divinely inspired language, often strikes upon the conscience with a force which nothing else would produce. As the children are likely to be influenced by other motives than a simple regard to their improvement, the discretion of the teachers should often be employed in selecting suitable passages of scripture to be learned; especially remembering that, as whatever is committed to memory should be briefly explained to the judgment, they should be more anxious for their pupils to learn *well* than to learn *much*.

In a little work which I have lately read, there is a passage which admirably explains my meaning and views. The writer is delineating the character, and describing the conduct, of a good teacher.

"Timothy called up his class, and the children repeated, each, one verse in rotation, the following passage, which they had previously committed to memory—

"But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matthew 22: 11-14)

"Timothy heard his children repeat this passage distinctly, and with an audible voice. And now he was anxious to learn whether they understood its meaning; he therefore affectionately asked them the following questions; "Can you tell me, my dear boy (beginning with the first boy in the class) who is meant by the king in this passage?" "The Lord Jesus Christ." "And why is he called a king?" "Because he has all power and authority." "Is not the Lord Jesus, God as well as man?" "Yes; the bible tells me the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." "Does Jesus Christ know all our hearts?" "Yes; he that formed my spirit must be intimately acquainted with it."—"Does the Lord Jesus take particular notice of those who profess to be his people?" "Yes; he came into see the guests." "Is he now present with us?" "Yes." "Yes, my dear children, the Lord Jesus is now beholding each of us. He sees who among you is giving heed, and who is inattentive. He marks that little boy who listens to his voice; but he is greatly offended with those who are whispering and do not regard the truths of his holy word." "What did the king see when he came in to view the guests?" "He saw there a man which had not a wedding garment." "Can you tell me what is meant by the wedding garment?" "It means the righteousness of Jesus Christ." "Are sinners naked who are not clothed with this robe?" "Yes; our own righteousness are as filthy rags." "What is meant by our own righteousness?" "Our own good works." "Will not these entitle us to the favor of God?" "No; God's law is perfect, and we can do nothing without a mixture of sin." "Will you inform me, my dear boy, what you understand by Christ's righteousness?" "His obedience unto death in our place." "What did the Lord Jesus say to the man who had no wedding garment?" "Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?" "Will not God, in the great day, call sinners to a strict account?" "Yes." "Will they then be able to excuse themselves?" "No; like this man, they will be speechless." "What shall be done to those who have not believed in Jesus?" "The king will say to his servants, bind them hand and foot, and cast them into outer darkness." "Are sinners able to resist the judgment of God?" "No." "No, my dear children; they who at last come into condemnation, like this man, shall never be able to resist it; like this man, who is bound hand and foot, they can never make their escape. Gladly would they wish the rocks and the

mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the face of the judge; but even this desire shall not be granted; they must endure the punishment of their iniquities." "Are those who die in sin deprived of the enjoyment of Jesus Christ, and holy angels?" "Yes; the king orders them to be taken away." "Where does he command them to be cast?" "Into outer darkness." "Children are generally afraid to be left in the dark. But, oh, what must it be to be cast forever into the thickest darkness! Think of it. You are happy when you see the morning sun; but no morning shall ever rise on those miserable creatures who die in a state of enmity to Jesus Christ." "How shall they be employed in his darkness?" "In weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth." "Do not these terms express great anguish?" "Yes; they will forever lament that they rejected the salvation of Jesus Christ." "Yes, my dear children, and if any of you follow their example you will share in their punishment." "Must not all of us soon appear before the judgment seat of Christ?" "Yes; our lives are uncertain; we may be called in a moment to give an account of ourselves to God." "What effect should this have upon us?" "It should lead us to give earnest heed to the things that belong to our peace before they are forever hidden from our eyes."

You have here a model which, in the communication of religious instruction, you would do well to imitate. Select a passage yourselves, and deliver it either to a whole class, or a part of it, to be learned by the next sabbath, when it should become the subject of examination; and in the mean time, consider what are the questions which it naturally suggests, that you may be prepared for the task. This is a most engaging and instructive method.

Another very judicious exercise for the children, is to *propose a question, and to require, by a given period, passages of scripture to prove, and illustrate it*; always remembering that the subjects of inquiry be plain, easy, and adapted to the capacity of the children. For the sake of example, I mention the following—

"What does the book of Genesis principally treat of?"

"What were the principal acts of transgression committed by

the children of Israel in the wilderness, and in what way did God punish them?

"Which of the prophets wrote most plainly of Jesus Christ; and in what parts of his writings does he allude to him?"

"In what passages of scripture is the divinity of Jesus Christ spoken of?"

"What did our Lord appeal to as a proof that he came from heaven, and is the son of God?"

"Where is the necessity of the new birth declared?"

"In what passages are filial duties enjoined?"

Such exercises as these possess the happiest tendency. They are an admirable discipline for the intellectual powers, and train the mind to habits of reflection, and diligent inquiry. They call the thinking principle into activity, and must produce considerable improvement in the mental character of the poor. But these are the smallest advantages of the plan; it leads to an engaging and enlarged acquaintance with the word of God, and establishes a sort of familiarity between the children and the bible, as the man of their counsel, and the guide of their youth.

It would be well also occasionally to examine the children as to their remembrance of the texts and sermons which they hear in the house of God. This would keep their attention alive to what is delivered from the pulpit, and lead them to recognize their own interest in the solemnities of public worship.

Such, among other means of communicating religious instruction, appear to me to be eminently adapted to promote this important end.

**3. But as very many know the theory of divine truth, without feeling its influence on the heart, or exhibiting it in the conduct; as they often see the right way; without walking in it; and as it is only they who**

**are renewed and sanctified by the truth, that will be eternally saved, to secure the ultimate object of your exertions, you must labor to produce *religious impression*, as well as communicate religious instruction.** I know it is God only who can reach the heart, but then he does it generally by pouring out his Spirit on judicious and well adapted means. Here then direct all your efforts, to awaken the conscience, to interest the feelings, and to engage the whole soul in the pursuit of salvation, and the business of religion. Let your aim be visible in your conduct, so that the children may be convinced that until they are brought to fear God, and serve him in truth, you do not consider yourself to have attained the object of your labors.

Let all you do be characterized by an impressive solemnity. Take care of treating sacred subjects with lightness. Never allow the holy scriptures to be read but with the greatest reverence. Mingle a devotional spirit with all you do. By all that is solemn, and all that is moving in religion, admonish and exhort the children. Endeavor to awe them by the terrors of the Lord, and melt them by his mercies. Roll over them the thunders of Mount Sinai, and display to them the moving scenes of Mount Calvary. Remind them of their mortality, and encircle their imagination with the scenery of the judgment day. Seize every event that the dispensations of divine providence may furnish to aid your endeavors. Relate to them instances of early piety, and at other times, cases of sudden and alarming dissolution. Watch for the appearance of religious concern, as that which can alone reward your labors, or satisfy your desire. Over every other kind of excellence than true religion, exclaim, "Ah! 'tis well, 'tis good, so far as it goes, but I want the fruits of immortality." When these begin to show themselves, hail the first buds of genuine religion with delight, shield them with a fostering care, and with a skillful hand direct their growth.

# The Sunday School Teacher's Guide

By John Angell James, 1816

## The QUALIFICATIONS which every teacher should seek to possess.

This is a part of the subject to which the attention of my readers should be directed with the deepest interest, and most lively solicitude. The following enumeration will furnish rather an elevated standard; but instead of condemning it as too high, it should be your endeavor to see how near you can approach it.

### **1. It is exceedingly important that you should be a partaker of real religion.**

By personal religion, I mean more than a general profession of attachment to Christianity; more than a correct theory of religious sentiments; more than a stated attendance upon devotional forms; I mean *an experimental acquaintance* with the truths of the gospel, in their consoling and sanctifying influence. 'Tis certainly very true, that without such a state of heart, you may be useful in promoting the subordinate ends of the institution, but can scarcely be expected to reach that end which is ultimate, and supreme. You may perform the humbler duties in this spiritual husbandry, of gathering out the stone, and preparing the soil, but to cast the seed of the kingdom must be left to other hands. You may, it is true, impart a knowledge of letters, and teach the children to read even the book of God; but to be the instrument of writing his laws upon their minds, and inscribing them upon their hearts, is an honor to which without true piety you cannot aspire.

The teacher who is earnestly seeking the eternal salvation of his children, occupies a station as far above the level of another teacher, who seeks nothing more than their temporal advantage—as the angel flying through the midst of heaven is above the traveler who is toiling across the low

and sandy desert. If I were to delineate, in picture, the emblem of a Sunday School teacher's duty and employment, I would represent Faith and Love, like the two angels that conducted Lot from Sodom, leading between them a poor child to the cross, and while one is directing his eye to the means of salvation, the other should be pointing him to the realms of eternal glory. But will this apply to you without decided personal religion? Oh no! If you are unconcerned about your own soul; if you gaze with a tearless eye upon the immortal ruins that lie within your own bosom; how can it be expected you will mourn over the spiritual desolation you see in others? How can you teach an unknown God? How can you represent that Savior as a pearl of great price, which to you is a stone of stumbling? Can you illustrate in what manner the principles of divine truth should constrain the conscience, and engage the affections; how they should become the elements of a new existence, and be breathed into the nostrils of the soul as the breath of spiritual life? what, this without experimental religion? No! Of all things it is most applicable to vital piety to be taught—it must be *felt*. And as you will be without *ability*, so in the absence of this qualification, you will be equally destitute of *inclination*, to seek the highest object of the institution. Can you feel disposed to alarm, to stimulate, to admonish others, in reference to the salvation of their souls, when every word brings back upon yourself the keen reproach, "Physician, heal yourself?" A tender conscience would not endure the insult; and to keep peace in your own bosom, you must soon abandon those favors abroad, which you refuse to bestow at home. If then you would start in the career of wisdom, and become candidates for a prize, which excites the ambition of two contending worlds, first become wise unto salvation for yourselves, and then, as from this mighty impulse, seek the eternal welfare of the children; "for he that wins souls is wise!"

## **2. A teacher should possess an accurate, and tolerably extensive acquaintance with divine truth.**

It is not possible, neither is it desirable, to ascertain the lowest measure of knowledge, with which true godliness is compatible. In many cases, in reference to the piety of the heart, and the ideas of the mind, it may be said, the light

shines in darkness. Far, very far removed from this *dawn* of divine truth in the soul, should be the degree of knowledge which every teacher should seek to possess. Your views should be clear and extensive. To much **love** in the heart—you should seek to add much **light** in the mind. You should have such an acquaintance with your bible, as to know to what parts of it more particularly to direct the attention of your scholars. You should have a competent knowledge of all its leading doctrines, and be able to cite with readiness particular passages to support them. Without this, how can you conduct the business of religious instruction with much effect? Remember your class forms a kind of little planetary system, of which, so far as instrumentality is concerned, you are the central luminary. If conscious of any considerable defect in religious knowledge, let your official responsibilities stimulate you to a more diligent perusal of the word of God. With you it should be an object of great desire not only to grow in grace, but also in the knowledge of God and our Savior Jesus Christ. You should devote much time to reading the scriptures and theological books. It would be found exceedingly beneficial, if you were to study with great attention the Assembly's Catechism, especially, if you can obtain it, the *larger* catechism, with proofs. Here you would find a clear and concise view of the doctrines and duties of divine truth, which, if stored in your mind, would greatly advance your usefulness as a teacher.

**3. Solemnity of deportment is indispensably necessary.** Here I would not be understood as wishing to envelope the schools of religion in the gloomy shades of a melancholy moroseness. You should be as remote from this disposition, as its opposite extreme, a trifling levity. A teacher of glad tidings should not array himself in sackcloth; nor should the messenger of mercy appear as sullen and repulsive as the specter of the cloister.

Religion, when wrapped in gloom, will present but little that is attractive to children; nor will they be able to conjecture, how a countenance that is professedly lifted up amidst the light of heaven, can present an aspect so gloomy, and so dark. Be it recollected, however, that the cheerfulness which true piety inspires, is holy and dignified like itself, and

resembles, not the dissipating glare which is thrown over a city by the gaudy lights of an illumination—but that soft and soothing radiance which beautifies the face of nature on a summer's eve. Religion has its smiles; they are not borrowed, however, from the scenes of a ball room, but from the splendid visions of eternity, and therefore, with the happiness of heaven, partake something of its seriousness. The topics of immortality look ill-placed in the hands of frivolity; and in such circumstances are sure to lose much of their effect.

The authority of a teacher, of whatever description may be his pupils, can be maintained only by a dignified sedateness of manners. If we may judge from the frequency with which it is enjoined in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit appears to attach great importance to this disposition, since not only are the office-bearers of the Christian church commanded to be serious and sober-minded, but even its ordinary members, and especially young men are charged to show seriousness and sincerity, as if it were hardly possible to be sincere in religion, without being serious in deportment.

If you see the importance of such a disposition, you will be impressed with the necessity of avoiding *a showy, and expensive mode of dress*. These remarks apply, of course, more closely to female teachers. A fondness for dress is one of the prevailing evils of the present day, and unhappily it has crept down into the lower classes of society, and imposes its tax upon those who are but not able to support it. It is greatly to be feared, that of the multitudes of unhappy females from among the poor, who have left the paths of virtue, great numbers have been first led astray by this vain and expensive propensity. Between wearing mirthful clothes, and a delight in exhibiting them, the connection is almost inseparable in the disposition of ignorant and little minds—while this 'love of display' has often been the first thing to attract the eye of the seducer, just as the peacock, by expanding his feathers in the sun, has sometimes caught the attention of the vulture perched upon an eminence, and looking round for his prey. If one may judge from the conduct of the lower classes at the present time, they seem to be endeavoring to hide beneath gaudy colors, the most distant approach to poverty. Ten

thousand evils will flow in upon society, and they have already begun to flow, when people shall conclude that they are respectable, in proportion as they are finely dressed.

How much is this disposition likely to be encouraged in the pupils, if it be enforced by the example of the teacher! Your children must have far more dignity of mind; far more solid reflection; and far more just discrimination, than can be expected in their circumstances, not to be fascinated with an exhibition, on your part, of "broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly apparel." To regard these things with indifference, when constantly displayed before their eyes, is too much to look for in them, when it is not found in you. With such an object before them, a whole train of the very worst feelings are likely to arise; admiration, envy, discontent, all are rapidly engendered. The touch of velvet, and the gloss of satins; together with feathers, flowers, and ribbons, have but little virtue to reconcile them to the coarser textures, and the plainer lines of poverty.

Permit me then to recommend **the utmost simplicity and neatness of apparel** as of great importance in your office. Especially and earnestly do I enjoin the most scrupulous *MODESTY*. Even a distant approach to the indecency which has characterized some modern fashions, would be offering poison to the morals of every child before whom it is displayed. I am not enjoining baseness, much less slovenliness or filthiness. These are a species of semi-vices wherever they exist, and are to be counteracted in your children, by the instruction of your lips, and the force of your example. What I recommend may be all summed up in two words, modesty and neatness; or to express it in the language of an apostle, "Your beauty should not consist of outward things like elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold ornaments or fine clothes; instead, it should consist of the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very valuable in God's eyes." (1 Peter 3:3-4)

**4. A teacher should be intimately acquainted with all the general proprieties of human conduct**, which arise out of the distinctions of society, and be deeply impressed with their importance.

You should not only clearly understand what is religiously and morally right, but also have a keen perception of those minor distinctions between right and wrong, which have been established by the authorized laws of human fellowship. You should be acquainted with the obligations of inferiors to superiors; and of people in dependent stations in life, to those who are their supporters or employers. You should be alive to all the little niceties of behavior demanded by courtesy, and be able to declare to the children the impropriety of any instance of rudeness, incivility, or ingratitude. Christianity, instead of sinking the distinctions of society, has elevated and guarded them; and indeed has employed its most sublime and interesting motives, to enforce the minutest offices of social life. The children of the poor, especially in large manufacturing towns, are often exceedingly destitute of that respectful deportment towards their superiors, which the order of society necessarily requires. This defect, it is your duty, as much as possible, to supply. A civil, submissive, respectful habit, is not to be considered as merely constituting the polish of *general* character, but in some measure preparing for religious impression. A crude, uncivil, intractable youth, is the last in the school in whose heart holy emotions are likely to be produced. He who feels little respect for human authority, is yet far distant from bowing with humility before that which is divine.

**5. It is very necessary that "an instructor of babes" should be able to communicate knowledge in a simple and familiar manner.**

This is a talent peculiarly requisite in those who are entrusted with the education of children. The mere *possession* of knowledge does not qualify for the business of instruction, except it be attended with an *aptitude in communicating it*. Every judicious teacher will consider the character of his audience, and adapt his communications to their capacity. If his sentiments be not understood, he may as well talk in a foreign language. Children require a very different mode of instruction, to what may be adopted in the case of well-educated adults. They are ignorant of the first principles of divine truth. Nothing, with respect to them,

must be taken for granted. You must assume nothing; everything is to be communicated. Perhaps it is the fault of all teachers, not excepting those who deliver their instructions from the pulpit, that they proceed on the supposition that their audience have more knowledge than they really possess. They take far too much for granted. This must be particularly avoided in the case of Sunday scholars. Of by far the greater number of them, it may be affirmed that they have not a single idea on the subject of religion, but what they learn from you; and you are to be very careful in presuming upon what they have learned.

The same remarks will apply to language as to sentiments. Their knowledge of words is as contracted as their range of ideas—and in order really to instruct them, you must always remember the extent of their vocabulary.

Your discourse cannot be too simple, and familiar, provided it be not vulgar. "Nothing (says Mr. Cecil) is easier than to talk to children; but to talk to them as they ought to be talked to, is the greatest effort of ability. A man must have a vigorous imagination, and be able to call in illustrations from the four corners of the earth; for he will make little progress but by illustration. It requires great genius to throw the mind into the habit of children's minds. I am surprised at nothing which Dr. Watts did, but his hymns for children. Other men could have written as well as he, in his other works; but how he wrote those hymns I know not."

An *aptitude* to teach children then in their own way, while it is necessary as a qualification, should be sought as an acquirement. I know of no better method by which this talent may be acquired than to read with attention, the most approved works which have been written for children, in order to mark, and imitate the style there adopted. Such, for instance, as Dr. Watts' Divine Songs for Children, and Miss Taylor's Hymns for Infant Minds, together with any other books, which manifest simplicity without baseness. If those who wish to cultivate an elegant style, read standard works of elegance, surely they whose office requires simplicity of address, should take the same pains to excel in their appropriate attainment.

## **6. A heart most deeply interested in the work, is a very necessary qualification.**

This is a cause which leaves no room for the operation of those principles, to which, in the general concerns of mankind, so large a portion of human activity may be traced. Here neither avarice, nor ambition, nor vanity—can have any place, or contribute in the least degree towards success. Without a heart deeply interested in the work, there can be no energy and no success. That teacher who feels no conviction of the importance of the cause, and no solicitude about its outcome, who has been led into the school by no motive at all, or at best, no other motive than to follow the example, or gratify the desire of others—has entered upon a station for which he is ill qualified, and from which the sooner he retires the better. Without a most benevolent attachment to the duties of your office, you cannot perform them with much effect. This alone will carry you through the difficulties, discouragements, and sacrifices, which it calls you to sustain. Without such an anxious desire to be successful, as shall constrain you to that activity which is requisite to ensure success, you will do but little. 'Tis painful to observe with what a sauntering indifference some people perform the duties of the school. They begin with weariness and end with disgust. 'Tis very evident that whatever they devote to the cause—they have never given their hearts.

## **7. A patient temper is exceedingly requisite.**

The business of instruction, especially the instruction of poor children, who have everything to learn—will often require the very utmost length of forbearance. You will meet with so much constitutional dullness, so much heedless attention, so much willful neglect, and so much insolent disobedience, that unless your feelings are under considerable control, you will often be hurried into excesses of impatience, disgraceful to yourself, and injurious to your pupils. The little vexations and irritations which arise *to try* a Sunday School Teacher's temper, are innumerable and unceasing. Yet to be successful you must be patient. You must discipline your temper until it is quite under restraint. A peevish or passionate manner, excited by every little irritating circumstance, renders you

exceedingly unfit to deal with the untutored minds and habits of the children of the poor. In many cases impatience in the teacher must be exceedingly injurious to the improvement of the scholar.

Some minds are very slow in their advances, very timid in their steps, and require the most affectionate forbearance, to be kept from utter despair, and to be encouraged to go on at all. Harsh impetuosity here would at once overwhelm them with confusion and dismay. Very, very often is a pupil thrown into such inextricable disorder by a hasty and terrifying sally of the master's impatience, that memory and judgment both forsake him in his fright, and leave him the motionless victim of injudicious anger. A person that has not patience to communicate knowledge 'drop by drop', should never think of undertaking the instruction of ignorant children, since it is utterly impossible to pour it into their minds by 'copious streams'. We have all forgotten how slow and unwilling we were to receive the elementals of education, but as all children are very much alike in this respect, we may calculate upon our own experience with respect to others, as tolerably correct data of the pains that were taken with ourselves, and find in this no weak motive to seek the qualification which I now enjoin.

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# **The Sunday School Teacher's Guide**

By John Angell James, 1816

## **Directions as to the MANNER in which a teacher should discharge the duties of his office**

Having disclosed to you the ultimate object of your exertions, and prescribed the qualifications necessary for accomplishing it, I shall now lay down some directions for the regulation of your conduct.

### **1. There should be a discriminating attention to the different capacities, and tempers of the children.**

A Sunday School may be considered as a plantation of young minds, the plants of which grow in different ways, and blossom at various times; each of them requiring a method of culture adapted to its nature. Some need to be brought forward to the sun; others to be thrown back into the shade. Some need to have their luxuriant growth repressed; others to have it encouraged.

Children vary exceedingly in their capacities for learning. Perception is more quick, memory more retentive, comprehension more enlarged in some than in others. What would be industry in one, would be indolence in another. Of this the teacher should be aware, lest by expecting the same in both cases, he produce despondency in the former, or nourish idleness in the latter. Nothing is more discouraging throughout the whole range of education, than to have the mind put upon exertions to which its faculties are unequal. The spirit, in such a case, like a horse that has sunk beneath his burden, lies down in despair, with scarce a struggle to rise. It is of immense importance that you should know the real capacity of your children, and that you should never

require of them impossibilities. You will often need much penetration to discriminate between a lack of inclination, and a lack of ability—this, however, may be easily acquired.

The *temper*, as well as the mind, will require the same judicious attention. Some are timid, and will need great pains to produce more confidence in themselves; others are forward, and must be assiduously taught to be more cautious. Some are open and sincere; others are artful and deceptive. Sometimes you will find a child of such tenderness, that harshness would be like training the sensitive plant with a bar of iron; and then again you will meet with such hard incorrigible stubbornness in another child, that a lenient softness would be like tying down the branches of the mountain oak with a silken thread. Study then the character of the children. Minds, like locks, are different—the same key will not open them all, yet a skillful locksmith may be open them all.

It is astonishing what may be effected in the work of education, by a little *ingenuity and invention*. There are some teachers who have a certain medication which they administer in every case. They never vary the application—a command, a threat, and a blow; and if this does not succeed, the case is abandoned as too desperate. Whereas a little variation in the mode of treatment, would have carried the point, and *ensured* success. We need more *ingenuity* in the business of education. To a certain extent, you should be experimentalists upon the human mind; and when you meet with a case which ordinary methods do not reach, you should call to your assistance the powers of invention, and try the effect of new measures. I will here insert two anecdotes illustrative of my meaning.

Mr. Raikes was in the habit of visiting the parents and children belonging to his schools at their own houses. He called on a poor woman one day, and found a very refractory girl crying, and sulking. Her mother complained that correction was of no avail, and that an inflexible obstinacy marked her conduct. After asking the parent's permission, he began to talk seriously to the girl, and concluded by telling her, that as the first step towards amendment, she must kneel down and ask her mother's

pardon. The girl continued sulky. "Well then (said he), if you have no regard for yourself, I have much regard for you. You will be ruined, and lost, if you do not begin to be a good girl; and if you will not humble yourself, I must humble myself, and make a beginning for you." With that he knelt down on the ground before the child's mother, and put his hands together with all the ceremony of a juvenile offender, and supplicated pardon for the guilty daughter. No sooner did the stubborn girl see him on his knees on her account, than her pride was overcome at once, and tenderness followed; she burst into tears, and throwing herself on her knees, entreated forgiveness; and what is still more pleasing, she gave no trouble afterwards.

What would many people have done in this instance? uttered a scolding threat, and left the girl the miserable victim of her own bad temper. A little ingenuity effected a rescue, for which, perhaps, this child blesses the name of Raikes to the present hour.

Mr. Lancaster had once under his care a boy of most indolent and intractable habits, on whom the ordinary methods of punishment produced no effect. He resolved, as the case seemed almost desperate, to try an experiment. He placed him as monitor over an inferior class, and in order more effectually to awaken a feeling of interest, and excite a habit of application, he opposed this class to another in a contest, proposing a reward to the monitor, whose class was victorious. The experiment succeeded to admiration. Ambition was excited in the boy's mind. During the probationary week he was every morning at school in good time, urging on his class to the most vigorous exertions. His truant habits were now broken; and rewarded by success, he became from that time a pattern of industry.

By teachers less versed in the art of instruction, this boy would have been given up as incorrigible. You perceive what I mean by *ingenuity* and invention, in education. Cultivate it. Indolence may sometimes be excited, where it cannot be driven. And one vice, where it cannot be forcibly and immediately eradicated, may be starved and withered in the shadow of some opposite virtue, which a skillful, and assiduous gardener may raise against it.

## **2. Exercise great judgment in the application of rewards and punishments.**

I am not now going to propose any particular kind of rewards, and punishments, as this little volume is not intended to regulate the formation of schools, but is addressed to teachers in their individual capacity, who are already engaged in supporting the order and arrangements of the school, to which they belong. My remarks will therefore apply to the subject generally.

The proper application of rewards, and punishments, is the most difficult part of the business of instruction. To perceive the first germinations, either of excellence or vice, when the former needs most to be encouraged, and the latter may be most easily destroyed, requires a most watchful and discriminating eye. To nourish merit by reward, and at the same time not to promote the growth of pride and selfishness, which are so apt to spring up by its side by the forcing heat of excessive commendation, requires uncommon skill; and no less judgment is necessary in the case of punishment, lest by pulling up some noxious weeds with too violent a hand, we tear with it some better plant.

With respect to *REWARD*, I should advise that as much as possible you deduce it from a child's own feelings. External stimulants, I am aware, are sometimes necessary. Indolence must often be roused by the proposal of a prize, the value of which ignorance and insensibility can comprehend. Anything is an advantage where everything else fails, which moves the stagnant dullness of some minds. But as a system, I recommend you, as much as possible, to make your children a reward to themselves. By a little pains you may make them sensible of the pleasures of good behavior, and the vast advantages of knowledge. When they have succeeded in a lesson, or an effort at good conduct, send them to their own bosom for a rewarding smile, and endeavor to make them sensible of the value of such rewards. By this means you are carrying on a system of moral education, by elevating the tribunal, and strengthening the authority of *conscience*. This powerful principle is often totally neglected

in the business of instruction. Its dictates are scarcely ever enforced, its authority seldom exhibited, and its solemn awards entirely superseded—by a bribing, hireling system of mercenary rewards.

In the education of the heart, conscience is the great auxiliary whose aid should be perpetually engaged. When a child has behaved so as to deserve commendation, instead of being judiciously instructed by his teacher in the pleasure of doing right, I acknowledge it is a much more easy method of reward simply to confer a ticket, which at some future day is to be transmuted into money—but it is more than questionable whether it is the most effective method.

I again repeat, I am not for excluding all external rewards, but I enjoin, as preeminently important, an endeavor to produce in the mind of the children, a conviction, that **one of the best rewards for doing right, is the pleasure of doing it.**

Much the same strain of remark will apply to *PUNISHMENT*. External chastisement is sometimes necessary. Even corporeal punishment, although it should be excluded as a regular system, may perhaps, in some cases of extremity, be resorted to, like bitter medicines, with success. In all cases of chastisement a teacher should carefully ascertain the *degree* of crime, and never forget to discriminate between sins of inadvertence and willful depravity. Between the thoughtless follies of childhood, and those actions which are deeply tinctured with moral turpitude, there is a wide difference, of which you should never lose sight. The teacher who in the infliction of punishment, removes all the distinctions which exist between different classes of offence, is in the way of removing, at least in the minds of his children, the natural distinction between right and wrong. Endeavor to keep your *own* temper. Never is a cool dispassionate manner more necessary than when administering reproof, or inflicting punishment. Grinding teeth, or flashing eyes, or quivering lips, or angry words, are very unlikely means to bring a child to penitence. They may terrify, but will not melt. They may extort confession but will not produce conviction. Enveloped in the mist of passion, how can you discriminate the precise degree of punishment

requisite to produce repentance?

*Let chastisement always be attended with an obvious regard to the interest of its subject.* No censor is so solemn or so effectual as love; and no reproofs sink so deeply in the heart, as those which fall from the lips of affection. Mercy would soften the mind for the impressions of justice. Where there is a conviction, that you chasten for the children's benefit, and not to gratify your own feelings—submission, if not reformation, will generally follow.

*Your great concern in every case of misconduct should be to produce a cordial penitence for the fault.* This, so far as the offender is concerned, is the very end of punishment. Without a perception of the impropriety of his conduct, and real sorrow for the offence, whatever punishment a child may receive, no solid basis is laid for reformation; and therefore very little is effected. By calm statement, by mild and forcible expostulation, by an appeal to the understanding and feelings of the children, much, except in cases of almost incorrigible obduracy, may be effected in leading to genuine penitence.

Great pains should be taken in every instance of moral delinquency to convince them *that their offence is committed chiefly against God*, and not merely in opposition either to the rules of the school, or the will of the teacher. It should be represented as a sin to be confessed to God, and for which there is no pardon, but through the blood of the Savior.

Great judgment should be exercised in endeavoring to conduct the whole business of punishment, in such a manner, as shall be least likely *to irritate or exasperate the feelings of the delinquent*. Surgeons, when it is necessary to employ the knife, are very careful to keep the whole frame as cool as possible, and to choose a time for operation when the diseased part is least under the power of inflammation. Select your times, and particularly remember not to push the rigors of punishment too far, nor continue them too long. The moment you perceive the mind softened to cordial concern for the fault, and that stubbornness or impenitence has given way to docility or contrition, then is the time for

punishment immediately to cease. Beyond this it would be breaking the bruised reed, and nipping the buds of reformation by the chilling influence of despair.

In short, as in the business of reward, so also in the business of punishment—make great use of the children's own feelings. Put the rod into the hand of conscience, and excite a trembling dread of the strokes which are inflicted by this internal censor.

### **3. Discharge your teaching duties in a HUMBLE and AFFECTIONATE manner.**

God, who framed the constitution of the human mind, and constructed all its mechanism, has himself informed us, what are the springs of action, which, by those who have anything to do in guiding its operations, should be chiefly touched. "I drew them," says Jehovah speaking of his conduct towards the Israelites, "with the cords of love, and the bands of a man." Here then, in this single short expression, we have compendiously expressed the whole theory of human government, whether it apply to families, to schools, or nations, whether it be designed to control the savage or the sage. This verse, which contains the philosophy of government, should be studied by everyone who has anything to do with his species in the way of enlightening their minds, improving their hearts, forming their characters, or exacting their obedience. *The cords of love are the bands of a man.*

In prescribing to you, therefore, the manner in which your duties are to be discharged, I must enjoin an affectionate and humble temper. Here I would not be understood as inculcating that weak, and foolish indulgence, which drops the controls of authority, and by abandoning the children to their own inclinations, is still more destructive than the sternest tyranny. The temper that I mean is perfectly compatible with the most **inflexible authority**, but it expresses itself in **tender and gentle manner and language**. The law of kindness is in its lips. Its commands and prohibitions are firm, but mild. It avoids a surly, stern, repulsive tone, and often distributes looks and smiles upon

its objects, which enter to their very hearts, and win them as captives to itself. It represses all that impatience which the ignorance, the follies, and the vices of the children without great watchfulness, have such a tendency to produce; and renders its possessor patient, loving and humble.

A teacher adopting such a method, takes the nearest road to the hearts of the youths committed to his care. He will secure their affection, and thus hold in his hand the key of their disposition. You mistake, greatly mistake, if you suppose a stern, tyrannical manner is necessary to maintain your authority. Besides, it becomes you to recollect, that you are not mere ordinary schoolmasters; you are teachers of piety; and that religion too which has so much to do with love. It is the duty of your office to teach the children the knowledge of that great Being, of whom it is said "God is love,"—to point to the cross of Jesus, and instruct them in the height, and breadth, and length, and depth of the love of Christ, which passes knowledge—to repeat to them severally, the commands of the two tables, and inform them that the fulfilling of the whole law, is love—to announce to them the three cardinal virtues of Christianity, faith, hope, love—and to inform them, the greatest of these is love. In short, to teach them that godliness, the essence of which in this world, and its perfection in the world to come, is love! How ill adapted, how inconsistent, how contradictory to such an office—is a harsh, surly, and tyrannical method of expression. In teaching the religion of Jesus, we must exhibit his spirit, as well as inculcate his doctrines; we must learn of him, who as a teacher, was meek and lowly in heart; for it should never be forgotten that in his religion, mercy and truth meet together.

#### **4. Unite your affectionate manner, with a DIGNIFIED manner.**

I have already hinted that these two are by no means incompatible with each other. Their union forms the very perfection of a godly teacher. Humility is not necessarily connected with degradation; nor is it requisite to be familiar, in order to be affable. Remember you are placed on an

eminence above your children, and however affection may lead you to *stoop* from it with kindness, in order the more effectually to reach them—still you must never *descend* from it, to be upon their level. Between you and them there is a boundary line, which must be mutually observed; and in order to keep them from overstepping it on their side, do not approach too near it on your own.

**You must keep up your authority!** For if you cannot ensure obedience, you had better retire. Let your method of addressing them in common conversation, be dignified, and respectful. Call them by their proper names, and never employ the abbreviated terms of vulgar phraseology. Avoid all jesting and low familiarity, together with the broad loud laugh of jocular merriment. If ever you would have them respect your authority—never trifle with it yourself. Let them see that you govern from principle, and not from caprice. In order to this, never require anything but what is reasonable, and insist upon the performance of all you require. Always deliberate before you command, or threaten—and then never relax afterwards. Your great aim should be that they may both love and respect you!

## **5. Pursue your exertions with unwearied PERSEVERANCE.**

It was little to the honor of Reuben, when his dying father thus delineated his character, "Unstable as water, you shall not excel." Instability is a great blemish of character, which occasional excellencies may conceal for a season—but do not remove the blemish. Instability is in general contemptible, but in the cause of teaching Scripture—it is cruel. Like the fig tree, which the Savior blasted, it excites our hopes, only to disappoint them. There are some people whose activity for a *season*, is ample. For a while they are all bustle and energy—but it is only for a while. I will not say that their exertions are utterly useless. Their zeal serves the part of thunder storms in the atmosphere of benevolence. Its roll is impressive, and its flashes, vivid as lightning—but just as transient. Still, however, even the storm is useful, though in a very subordinate degree to other influences—which are more steady, more permanent, and

more fruitful. How often have we had to lament the sudden resignation of teachers, whose labors required nothing but continuance to render them incalculably useful; but over whom we exclaimed with a sigh, "You did run well, what has hindered you?"

It will be proper to enumerate here **some of the causes which frequently operate in producing a lack of the perseverance** I am now enjoining.

**A. In some cases a lack of perseverance arises from the self-denying nature of the employment; and the difficulties and sacrifices of which were not previously considered.** In prospect of any intended labor, it is the part of wisdom to sit down and count the cost. Where this is neglected, even the smallest difficulties, as they come upon us when neither expecting them, nor prepared for them—are likely to have a very discouraging effect upon the mind. It is vain to deny, and useless to conceal—that the office of a Sunday School teacher, is attended with no trifling sacrifices of ease and comfort, which unless they were previously foreseen, will, in all probability, soon drive them from the work.

Should these pages meet the eye of anyone who is about shamefully to retire before the face of a few unexpected toils—I entreat him to consider the importance of the cause he is disposed to abandon. Let him meditate upon the worth of souls, and call up the interests of two worlds, which depend so much upon religious instruction—and then say, if he ought not to blush at the thought of retreating. Did the Son of God labor through a life of poverty, agonize in a death of torture, for immortal souls—and will you cast from you their interests because a little sacrifice of time and ease is required? Can *you* pretend to fellowship with Christ? If selfishness has not chilled your blood at its fountain, let it rise into your cheek with the blush of holy shame, and be the signal from this hour for rallying your retreating benevolence.

**B. Some teachers have been induced to give up their employment on account of a misunderstanding with their associates.** It is much to the reproach of human

nature, that there is no object—however *remote* from the usual track of discord; however *elevated* above the mists of misunderstanding; or however distinct from the interests of selfishness—but sometimes becomes the unwilling occasion of strife, and alienation among those who support it. One would imagine, if experience were not a more credible witness than fancy, that the regions of benevolence were too rarified an atmosphere for discord to breathe in. But we know to the contrary. Offences among the active supporters of a Sunday School are, alas! too common, and have driven away many a valuable teacher from his office. Let those, however, who are under the influence of such a temptation, and have well near resolved to quit their post, because of some injury they have received—seriously consider what the poor children have done, that *they* are to be objects of their revenge; for on them at last the anger falls!

Let them imagine the great God following them into their retirement, and proposing to them a question similar to that with which he surprised his disheartened prophet, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" Would they venture to reply, or if they did, would it not be with trembling and confusion, "Lord, I was offended by my fellow teachers, therefore I determined to give up the employment altogether." "And what," it may be expected, would Jehovah reply, "have these poor ignorant, lost children done—that *they* must suffer for the wrong *you* have received? Have I borne with your offences, and provocations, lo! these many years—and have never forsaken you? And yet now for one slight injury do you forsake both my cause, and the interests of those poor babes, that I had entrusted to your care! Is this your gratitude! Is this your obedience! Is this your religion!" Bow to the rebuke. Confess your folly. Be reconciled to the offender—and *persevere* in your duty.

**C. Nearly connected with this is a *dislike to some of the arrangements of the school*, which not infrequently induces a teacher to make their alteration a condition of his continuing in office. This cannot, and very generally ought not to be done, unless the managers are convinced that the proposed alterations are for the benefit of the institution—and even then it ought not to be done with the view of gratifying an individual—but of improving the school.**

The disposition which leads a man to say, "Unless you alter this or that—I will immediately resign," with whatever plausible excuses it may be covered—is usually in reality nothing more or better than rank pride. Such teachers would do well to consider what would be the consequence, if everyone like themselves had an alteration to propose, as a condition of their continuance. They can scarcely pretend to be actuated by feelings of benevolence, since whatever defects or imperfections they may discover in the school, even with all these clogging their operations, they can certainly do much more good by continuing than retiring. If they are really convinced that the system of instruction would be improved by the adoption of their views, and are conscious of being actuated by benevolence, and not merely by self-will, then, in the true spirit of a reformer, they should continue in their office, with the hope of one day being able to accomplish the object of desire.

**D. In some cases young people have left their office, because there were none in the school of equal social or economic standing with themselves in life.** What! shall pride, that disgusting and destructive vice, be allowed admission to the field of mercy's sacred labors? What! must our very compassion be made dependent on the finery which the milliner, the jeweler, or the tailor can supply to a fellow laborer, in the cause of God and souls? That the 'frivolous and the mirthful' should refuse to resort to a place where 'corresponding glitter' is not to be found, is not surprising. But to refuse to distribute the benefits of instruction to the ignorant, and the blessings of salvation to the perishing—unless we have by our side one as well dressed as ourselves, seems the very climax of all that is absurd in human pride!

Is this then a cause which can be ennobled by the 'splendor'—or degraded by the 'obscurity', of its teachers? Is it not enough that you are employed as the almoners of God's richest gifts, and engaged for the benefit of immortal interests? The loftiest seraph that glows, and burns in the temple above, if commissioned by his God, would accept with gratitude the office you are disposed to vacate, and in teaching the knowledge of his exalted Lord, would think himself most honorably employed, though his pupils were

the poorest of children, and his associates the poorest of teachers. If however you must have fellow-workers who are your equals—you have only to look up with the eye of faith, and you would find yourself surrounded with ministers and missionaries; prophets and apostles; the wise and good of every age, who have all been pursuing, though in another way, the same grand object as you are seeking. And even all this, what is it to the thought of being, although in the humblest sense, *a fellow worker with God*, and Christ, in the redemption of a lost and miserable world?

**E. Marriage has very frequently put an untimely close to a teacher's labors.** I have seen very many instances in which the next Sunday after the marital union has been formed, both parties have relinquished their office at the school. Does that union, then, which was designed by its divine author as the basis of society, release us from a single obligation to promote its welfare? Or do we acquire a sanctity of character at the marriage altar, which is profaned by exposing it in a Sunday School? Or do the tender affections which this connection produces, unfit the parties for an office, one qualification of which is love?

I acknowledge, that in many, perhaps in most cases, the secession of *females* becomes a matter of necessity—but for a young man to give up his attention to the cause of God, the very first Sunday after he has received the greatest relative blessing heaven has to bestow, is a cold expression of gratitude to his benefactor. Until a rising family of his own prefer more just and sacred claims upon his time than the children of the poor—it is both absurd and cruel to take it away from them! How can he better prepare himself to become the preceptor of the little circle, that may one day surround his own fire-side, than by acquiring the art of instruction among the sons and daughters of the stranger?

Such are the more prevailing causes that produce a lack of perseverance, and such the manner in which they may be removed.

**5. I mention CONSTANCY as exceedingly important, in the manner of discharging the duties of a teacher's**

## **office.**

This, perhaps, may seem like a repetition of the direction just expressed. But there is a difference. By **perseverance**, I intend a *continuance* in office. And by **constancy**, a steady, uniform, and undiverted discharge of its duties. In most large towns circumstances are continually occurring which put this virtue to the test. Some popular minister is to preach; or one of the resident ministers is to preach a charity sermon, or funeral discourse. On such occasions, without a firm and ready attachment to the business he has undertaken, a teacher is in great danger of being induced to quit his post.

There is one sect in the religious world, which, although not enumerated in any book of denominations, or any theological dictionary; which, although it has neither distinct creed, nor separate temples, still is entitled to a specific notification; this sect I shall denominate the "CURIOSI"—their identifying trait is *a love of novelty*. They belong to any preacher who, for the time, can interest them by something new; and they attach themselves to every congregation that has something extraordinary going on. Thus, as they are carried along the stream of profession like twigs and chips that are floating near the edge of a river, they are intercepted by every weed, and whirled in every little eddy.

If you would be a useful, or respectable teacher, you must not belong to this denomination. It does not rank very high in heaven above, or earth beneath. They would fain persuade you, that like the bee, they are sucking honey from every flower. But more like the butterfly, they rove through all the garden of the Lord, not to sip the most luxurious—but to flutter with a vain and useless frivolity around the most gaudy blossom within the sacred enclosure. Be always at your post, and let it be your glory to find what powerful attraction you can resist, rather than be absent from your needy charge.

## **6. PUNCTUALITY in a teacher is vitally connected with the prosperity of the school.**

When one considers the importance of the object in which you are engaged, and add to this the little time at most, you can command for seeking it—one might have presumed that it would be quite unnecessary to caution you against devoting less time to this ministry. And yet it is painful to be obliged to assert, that there is scarcely one evil, under which the whole system more severely suffers, than *a lack of punctuality* in the teachers. It is an evil which eats into the very core of the institution. Precisely in the degree to which it exists, the order of the school must be interrupted, the solemnity of instruction disturbed, and the whole machine be impeded. Nor will the mischief stop here. The children perceiving that it is useless to be there before their teachers, and imitating their irregularity, will sink into the same habits of inattention and neglect. Late masters, must make late scholars. 'Tis useless for you to admonish your class to be early, if by example you instruct them to be late.

There are several **causes** which lead to the evil of which I now complain.

***A. A thoughtless disregard to the importance of punctuality in general, is observable in some people.*** They are always, and in everything, late. If they have an engagement to perform, they never think of preparing for it until the time of commencement is past. On the Sunday they do not set off to public worship, until the clock reminds them they ought at that moment to be in their pew. "A few minutes," they lazily exclaim; "can make no great difference." A few minutes make no difference!!! If everyone, and in everything, were to act upon this principle—but for one day, the world would be chaos. This procrastinating temper is a bane, under the influence of which the interests of society are suffering in a thousand ways; and that man would deserve the thanks of his species, who could furnish the most effectual antidote against it. *There is a time for everything; and let everything be done in its time.* In common language we speak of fetching up lost time—but in strict propriety, this is impossible. *A moment lost, can never be recovered!*

**B. Late rising on the Sunday morning is a great obstacle in the way of punctuality.** Perhaps I shall be thought uncharitable in expressing my apprehensions, that by many professing Christians, the season of slumber is protracted to an unusual length on the morning of the Sunday; and that day which was mercifully intended as a season of rest, is sinfully converted into a period of indolence. Considering how closely the world and its concerns follow us on other days, one might imagine, that we would feel disposed to make the Sunday as long as possible. It is the last day we ought to shorten. And were our souls in a state of high spiritual prosperity, we should, like the lark, be soaring towards heaven upon the wings of the morning, while the greater part of the world below us was still wrapped in silence and in sleep; and, like the nightingale, continue to pour forth our songs in the night, when the multitude around us, to relieve the tedium of the sacred day, had prematurely sunk to their rest.

But consider that *your* sloth defrauds not only your own soul—but also the souls of your children at the school! The idea of such forbidden slumber should present you with—is a shepherd depriving his lambs of their food. Rising late, you are often driven to the school without prayer, and without preparation, and even then are often long late yourself. Every beam of the morning, as it gently touches the lids of your eyes, seems to address you in the language of Christ to his slumbering disciples, "Why sleep you? Rise and pray." Or if this be too gentle a voice to rouse you from your slumbers, let harsher tones disturb you, "What do you mean, O sleeper? Arise, call upon your God."

**C. Another cause of lack of punctuality, is *too much time employed at the dinner table.*** Are there *Christians* who devote the Sunday to more than ordinary gratification of the palate, and who, in order to provide for their pleasure, employ their servants or themselves during the most precious portion of the day, in preparing for the table? Alas! to the shame of many, who make large professions, this question must be answered in the affirmative! In some cases it is beyond a teacher's control to alter the arrangements of a family—but it is within everyone's ability to content himself with anything the house affords, rather

than be late at school, by waiting for the roast that is smoking at the oven. Do I ask a costly sacrifice for the interests of the children? What! a WARM *dinner* on Sundays too much to give up for those souls, for which the Savior gave his blood? This too much to relinquish, in order that you may hasten with the bread of life to those who are perishing for lack of it? Can you begrudge *this* gratification when it is to enlarge your opportunity of endeavoring to save those souls, which if finally lost, shall never have the temporary mitigation of their torments—which even a drop of water affords to a burning tongue!

Let me then enjoin, with peculiar earnestness, a strict regard to *punctuality*. That you may feel more strongly the obligations to this, I again entreat you to recollect how short a space of time, even at most, the children can enjoy your instructions, A few hours on the Sunday, with respect to most of them, are all the time during which through the whole week they hear or see anything like piety. Make not the little time, less.

## **7. Crown all your labors with fervent, and habitual PRAYER.**

It is important for you, in all your exertions, to bear in mind the total and universal depravity of the human race. By total depravity, I do not mean that people are as bad as they can be, for in general they lie under strong restraints--and most do not sin with reckless abandonment. I do not mean that they are all equally wicked, for some are less sinful than others. I do not mean that they are destitute of everything useful, and lovely in society; their social affections are often strong and praiseworthy. I do not mean that their actions are always

wrong; the contrary is manifestly true. What I mean by total depravity, is an entire destitution in the human heart by nature--of all spiritual affection, and holy propensities. In this view every child is totally depraved.

To change this state of the mind, and produce a holy bias;

to create a new disposition, to turn all the affections into a new channel, and cause them to flow towards God and heaven, is the work of the omnipotent and eternal Spirit, who in the executions of his purposes, however, generally employs the instrumentality of man. Now this view of the case must be ever before your mind; it must mingle with all your plans, and direct all your exertions. You must accurately understand the nature of the materials on which you have to work, and be intimately acquainted with the source from whence success is to be expected. You must sow the seed in its season with the diligence of the farmer, and then exercise, like him, an unlimited dependence upon the influences of the heavens; for it is God that gives increase to the labors of both.

A spirit of earnest prayer should be the living soul of all your conduct. While your eye is fixed upon the children, your heart should be lifted up to God. You should sit down as between them and the fountain of life, and while opening by instruction a channel to their hearts, seek to draw the living stream by prayer from heaven. Your *closet* should also be the scene of your concern for their welfare. In those seasons of hallowed seclusion, when your soul makes her nearest and happiest approaches to the throne of divine grace, concentrate on *their* immortal interests. God loves the prayers of his people, and especially delights in the prayers of pious benevolence. Importune him, therefore; to bless your efforts. Confess to him that the work of conversion is all his own. Hang the interests of the school upon his arm, and lay them down in the light of his countenance.

Especially *on the morning of the Sunday*, in the prospect of your exertions. Next to your own growth in grace, seek the principal subject of your prayers, in the welfare of the children. Pray for grace to be found faithful; and to be made sufficient for these things. Entreat of God to rouse you from lukewarmness, and to enable you to feel the weight of others' souls, upon your own. *There* qualify yourself, if I may so speak, for your office. 'Tis astonishing what an effect is produced, even on our own feelings, by fervent prayer. It elevates in our minds, and endears to our heart—every object which it embraces. It is not the pleading of an hireling advocate, who, after the most eloquent appeals, receives his

fee, and forgets his client. But the intercession of genuine love, which is inflamed towards its object, by its own impassioned entreaties on its behalf.

Prayer will cherish all the tenderest sensibilities of the heart, and keep down the growth and influence of our natural selfishness. Did you come to the school every Sunday morning, like Moses from the mount, direct from the presence and the converse of God; bringing all the solemn tenderness with which you had supplicated for the children at the mercy-seat—what a godly character would be imparted to your deportment! The solemn air of eternity, irradiated with the beams of heavenly glory, would be visible upon your countenance; while the meekness of Jesus, and the mercy of his gospel, breathed forth in all your language, would admonish the children, that it was not a time for them to trifle, when their teacher had come to them with a "message from God!"

Provided they possess other qualifications in an equal degree—those who are most prayerful will be most successful. On the other hand, it is matter of little surprise, that no spiritual benefit or success attends the efforts of those by whom the duty of prayer is neglected. They labor, as might be expected, in a field on which the dew of heaven seldom distills—and which brings forth little else than thorns, and briars. Whenever we shall be favored to perceive a spirit of prayer resting upon the great mass of our teachers, and insinuating itself into all their exertions, we shall not wait long before we hear of a degree of success among the children, which will delight and astonish us; for it is said of Jehovah, that "He hears prayer."

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## **The Sunday School Teacher's Guide**

By John Angell James, 1816

### **THE DUTIES OF TEACHERS TO EACH OTHER**

In every case of combined exertion, there are mutual obligations devolving upon the co-workers; on the due discharge of which the success of their efforts materially depends. This is obviously true of the case in hand. Besides what is due to the children from the teachers, there is much to be observed by the teachers towards each other.

#### **1. They should cultivate a spirit of reciprocal affection.**

In addition to the ordinary reasons for brotherly love, which exist in every case, your circumstances supply another of considerable weight. Unity of exertion certainly calls for unity of affection; for the former without the latter can exist—but in a very feeble degree, and be crowned only with very partial success. Love should be the 'superintendent' of every school. Affectionately devoted to the object of the institution, you should love everyone who contributes in the least measure to its success. Worldly, and even wicked associations, lead to strong affection between the united parties—the soldier contracts a strong affection for his comrade who is fighting by his side; the servant who is faithfully devoted to his master's interest, feels a regard for his fellow-servant, in whom he discovers the same fidelity; the traveler forms a growing friendship for the person whom he has incidentally met with on the road, and with whom he shares the toils and the dangers of the way; even the fraternity of robbers, generates sometimes a sort of affection for each other.

Certainly then, a co-operation so benevolent in its object, and so holy in its acknowledged bond of union, ought to produce a high degree of Christian love. Laboring side by

side in the cause of immortal souls; that cause in which the Savior spent his life, and shed his blood; that cause, which from beginning to end is emphatically the cause of love, you should cultivate towards each other no common measure of hallowed friendship. It is not enough that you avoid a state of open enmity; it is not enough that you maintain a kind of complaisant indifference, or a cold and civil distance; all this is very far below that cordial and glowing affection which should be cherished among the fellow-workers in such a cause. This should be the prompt and generous language of one heart to another, "I love you, for your love to these children, and the interests of piety." The teachers of every school should form a holy family; a beautiful fraternity associated by the bond of affection, for the purpose of benevolence, within whose sacred, and peaceful circle, envy, jealousy and strife, should never be allowed a place—but which should incessantly exhibit the "good and pleasant sight of brethren dwelling together in unity."

## **2. There should be cordial, and *general* cooperation in everything which concerns the institution.**

The prosperity of the *school at large*, is what every individual teacher should keep in view, and which he should seek by the improvement of his own class. It is of vast importance that you should steadily and permanently remember, that although you have separate and individual duties, yet you have no private, and separate *interests*. The school forms a little community, of which you are a member, and against which it is a sort of high treason to violate its integrity, by setting up the interests of distinct parties. *You must all act together*. The worst of evils have arisen from the teachers being divided, as is sometimes the case, into little separate groups. These are frequently, perhaps generally, produced by the operation of private friendship. For example, here are two or three of the number who, from congeniality of mind, or long intimacy, are on habits of the most friendly fellowship. Forgetting the consequences which are likely to ensue, they take no pains to conceal, or suspend their fellowship during the time they are at the school. They are often seen talking to each other, and exchanging the warmest expressions of endeared friendship, while the rest are passed by with cold civilities, or

indifference. All this while, a spirit of division is imperceptibly generated. Others perceiving that they are not to be admitted to the select circle, form parties of their own. During the usual and uninterrupted routine of ordinary business, no effect peculiarly injurious perhaps arises—but the very first time that an offence occurs, or a diversity of opinion takes place, the mischief which has been secretly collecting, explodes. Factions are instantly formed with the most exact precision, according to the parties which had been previously composed. Opposition grows strong. The work of division and alienation goes forward. The seeds of lasting discord are sown, and it is very long before the school recovers the injury.

Take care, therefore, of splitting the teachers into parties. Particular friendships you are not forbidden to *form*—but at the same time remember that the school is not the place to *display* them. Even should you walk in company to the scene of your labors, remember to separate as friends, the moment you touch the threshold of the school room, and suspending for a season the visible partialities of favorites, mingle with the whole body, and feeling the pressure of a general bond, act upon the principle that you are *all one*.

Especially take care of systematically thinking and acting with a certain party. Endeavor, in all cases of diversity of opinion, to act independently and conscientiously. Be very watchful that affection does not impose upon your judgment, and that private attachments do not influence your public conduct—for if it is seen that in your official duties, you act independently of personal regard, such friendships, however well known, will make no party, and therefore do no harm.

### **3. Never make the real, or supposed faults of one teacher, the matter of conversation among others.**

This rule equally extends to official delinquencies, and personal offences. There is a most powerful propensity in human nature, to what has been denominated with considerable propriety, *backbiting*—or making the faults of an absent person the subject of conversation. This is a vice so evil, so mischievous, so cowardly; so characteristic of

littleness, as well as of malignity—that every holy man should hate it, and every wise man be ashamed of it. O what wisdom, what mercy, what beauty is there in our Lord's direction, "If your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone; if he shall hear you, you have gained your brother. But if he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more; that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." If this rule were universally obeyed, most of the feuds and quarrels which destroy the peace, and desolate the temporal interests of mankind, would be cut off.

"Tell him his fault between you and him alone," and of course this must mean, tell *him first*—let not another know it, until you have tried the effect of this private and personal representation. How often has the harmony of our schools been interrupted by a violation of this simple and beautiful rule. A teacher's faults have been made the matter of free conversation, until the subject swelled by falsehood, and envenomed by malignity, has come to his ears in the most exasperating form. It is quite melancholy to reflect, from what slight causes, the most serious animosities have arisen, even among those who were professedly teaching a religion of forgiveness; and the grief is increased by considering what a small measure of forbearance would at one time have proved sufficient for preventing the whole series of subsequent mischief.

It is a difficult point to settle, who is most to blame, and most answerable for the consequences—the person who first commits backbiting, or he who by revenging, or publishing it, causes it to extend its mischievous effects. If my neighbor be wanton, or wicked enough to throw a kindled firebrand into my dwelling, and I, instead of immediately quenching it, throw it back into his premises, or cast it into the air, for the wind to carry it where it will, am I less answerable for the conflagration than he? Thus when you are offended, if instead of going to him alone, and endeavoring to come to an amicable adjustment of the affair, you throw back the firebrand in revenge, or cast it into the air, by publicly talking of the matter, and a fire of contention ensues, you are perhaps the guiltier individual of the two.

Let me here enjoin upon all concerned in the active duties of a Sunday School, the diligent cultivation of that love, which the apostle has so exquisitely described, "Love is patient"—when injured does not seek revenge. "Love is kind"—is desirous of making everyone happy. "Love envies not"—feels no pain at the sight of another's excellencies or possession; nor dislikes him on that account. "Love is not boastful"—does not brag of what it has done or can do. "Love is not puffed up"—has no proud conceit of its own attainments or achievements. "Love does not behave improperly"—quietly discharges the duties of its own rank, station, age, or gender, without crudely stepping out of its own appropriate circle. "Love seeks not her own"—abhors selfishness. "Love is not easily provoked"—is as backward to *take* offence, as it is to *revenge* it. "Love thinks no evil"—is willing to impute a good motive, until a bad one is proved. "Love rejoices not in iniquity—but rejoices in the truth"—mourns the failings; and delights in the excellencies of its opponent. "Love bears, or covers all things"—covers with a mantle of love, those faults which it is not necessary to disclose. "Love believes all things"—to the advantage of another. "Love hopes all things"—where there is scarcely evidence sufficient to induce belief. "Love endures all things"—is willing to make any sacrifice, and endure any privation consistent with truth, in order to promote peace.

What schools we would have under the control of such a spirit? What hinders us from elevating this Godlike, heavenly, and everlasting virtue, as the ruling temper of our hearts, and the all-pervading spirit of the institution?

#### **4. Always address each other with kindness and respect.**

Avoid everything domineering, uncivil, and disrespectful, both in manner and in tone. It is greatly to be regretted that suavity of speech, and politeness of manners, appear with some people, to rank among heterodox virtues. But I have yet to learn in what page of revelation courtesy is forbidden. Gold is not the less weighty for being burnished, nor the diamond less valuable for being polished—no, nor is real religion the less pure for being decorated with the ornament

of real courtesy. The holiness of a saint, receives no contamination or alloy from the manners of a gentleman.

I am not inculcating the stiff, cold etiquette of a heartless and cringing politeness—but that affectionate, and respectful attention to each other's feelings, which is compounded of benevolence and good manners. "Let the law of kindness be in your lips, and your speech be always with grace," remembering you are not many masters—but brethren.

It is of considerable moment that as the children are required to respect their instructors, they should be invariably taught to do this, by the example of the teachers, mutually respecting each other. And as it is one object of Sunday School instruction, though not the ultimate one, to check what is crude, and polish what is rough in the manners of the children, it is of no small consequence, that in the conduct of their teachers, they should constantly have before their eyes, very correct models of kindness and respect

## **5. Never interfere with the duties of each other.**

An interfering, meddling disposition, is sure to do mischief, and incur contempt. Your respective duties are sufficiently distinct to be clearly ascertained, and to render encroachment inexcusable on the ground of ignorance. Upon observing any irregularity, or neglect in the class of another, instead of attempting to rectify it yourself, mention it kindly to the teacher to whom it appertains; especially remembering that the hint be given as privately and delicately as possible, as no one should be convicted or reprov'd before his own pupils.

## **6. Be very careful to discharge the general duties of your office in a manner suitable to your age, gender, and condition in life.**

*Older and younger teachers* are under reciprocal obligations to each other. They whose years and experience entitle them to considerable deference from their younger fellow-laborers, should be exceedingly anxious to employ their

seniority to great advantage. Let them remember the influence of their example, and therefore, not merely abstain from everything which it would be injurious for others to imitate—but abound in every virtue which may be copied with advantage. Extraordinary seriousness and zeal should characterize all their deportment. Connected with this should be a friendly *disposition to associate* with their younger brethren. There should be no distant, reserved and repulsive behavior—but a willingness to instruct, encourage and guide them—unattended by a wish to dictate and govern. How eminently serviceable might such people render themselves by repressing intemperate zeal, by giving to youthful ardor a right direction, and smoothing the ruggedness with which the first stage in the career of usefulness, is sometimes marked. Instead, therefore, of viewing the junior teachers as too young to be their associates, and leaving them to companions, as inexperienced as themselves—let the senior laborers in this good cause, consider them as objects commended to their especial protection, whom by their fostering care, they are to train up to excellence in the duties of their office.

On the other hand, let the *younger teachers* be thoroughly aware of the duties of their age. Let them seek the company of their seniors; treat them with respect, solicit their advice, and hearken to their opinions with deference. Where youth is modestly inquisitive, and old age unostentatiously communicative, much benefit must result from their being brought into association. Young people, however, are exceedingly apt to be forward, flippant, positive and self-confident. Nothing can be more unbecoming and offensive, than to see a person, young perhaps in years, still younger in experience, forgetful of the deference due to those who are wiser and older than himself, urging his own plans and views with a pertinacity which is scarcely tolerable in grey hairs, and contending for their adoption in opposition to the riper wisdom of his seniors—as if he had received them by revelation from heaven. Modesty is a disposition so necessary in the character of youth, that no talents can be a substitute for it, nor can any attainments, however splendid, be admitted as a substitute for the lack of it. Let those who have but recently entered upon their office, then, always listen with great humility to those who have been employed

for years, and eagerly avail themselves of the testimony of experience. The worst of evils have arisen from that haughty temper, which amidst the pride of independence, forgets, that vast 'superiority of qualification' is often connected with 'perfect equality of rank'—and that in such cases deference is no degradation.

Between the teachers of *opposite genders*, there are duties to be discharged which involve their own respectability, and the character of the institution. Some people, who understand no logic but that of the pocket, and who find it more cheap to find out the faults of an institution, than the means of its support, have sometimes made this objection against the plan of gratuitous teaching in our Sunday Schools, "that it gives occasion for too frequent meetings of young people, and often leads to hasty and injudicious connections in life." Leaving this unsubstantial objection to pass like a shadow over a rock, I certainly see the necessity and importance of the most punctilious regard to all the rules of modesty, and reserve, between male and female teachers. A school room is not the place, nor is the Sunday a time for gossip between young men and women. Nothing can be more improper than to see young men intruding into apartments appropriated to the instruction of girls, and there nodding, laughing, or talking to some female acquaintance. Before an assembly of poor children, one of whose greatest dangers arises from a lack of proper and delicate reserve between the opposite sexes, and who are ready to copy with avidity any lack of decorum in their teachers, the very smallest deviation from the strict rules of propriety is a crime not only against their manners—but against their morals. Under such circumstances the most scrupulous circumspection is indispensably requisite.

And here, perhaps, it may be neither unseasonable, nor unnecessary, to caution young people against being led into ill-advised connections, by the fellowship they necessarily must have with each other, after every rule of decorum has been observed. There exists no reason why a connection commenced at a Sunday School should necessarily be a bad one; nor do the other hand, why it should necessarily be a good one. People may be very excellent teachers, and yet be very ill adapted for husbands or wives. The qualifications

required for these respective relationships, are of an order, in some respects so essentially different, that there is no arguing from the one to the other.

Sometimes we shall find in the same school, people of very *different standing in life*; and such a disparity, without an attention to the duties which it entails, is likely to be attended with some degree of discord. The richer, and better educated members of the little community, should be careful to exclude from their conduct everything that looks like the pride of station, and at the same time to avoid that insulting condescension, which makes its object feel at what a distance it is considered. It is a nice and delicate point to distinguish between affability and familiarity; and to act with those who are below us in life, as fellow laborers in the school, without making them our companions outside of it.

Those whom providence has destined to fill the humbler stations of society, and who are engaged in the work of teaching with others of more elevated circumstances, will also do well to guard against an obtrusive, and forward disposition; and without being servile should always be respectful. All they ought to expect from their superiors, is a kind cooperation in the duties of the school, without the familiarity of friends and companions in general.

## **7. PRAYER is a duty which the teachers of a Sunday School mutually owe to each other.**

If we are commanded to make supplication for all men, even for those with whom we have no other connection than what is established by the common bond of humanity, surely those ought not to be excluded from our petitions, with whom we are united in the communion of Christian benevolence.

Mutual prayer, as we have already considered in the case of the children, would be productive, in proportion to its fervor, of mutual endearment. If on a Sunday morning, you devoted a portion of the time spent in the closet, to entreat the blessing of God upon the people and labors of your fellow teachers, how sweetly would such an engagement prepare

you to mingle with them in the duties of the day! Softened to benevolence by the exercises of piety, and with the fire of love still burning, which prayer had kindled in your heart upon the altar of devotion, with what a holy temper would you hasten to the scene of your exertions, and with what a glowing affection, look around upon the object of your fervent supplications! What an influence might it be expected such a system of mutual prayer—sincerely, importunately, and perseveringly presented, would draw down from heaven upon the institution at large!! Showers of blessings would come down in their season, in which children and teachers would reciprocally rejoice. God hears and answers prayer; and of all the prayers which enter heaven, and rise before the throne, we can readily conceive that none more speedily catch his ear, and move his hand, than those which one Christian pours over the religious zeal of another; since such prayers, like the aromatic incense which rose like a cloud before the mercy-seat, are compounded of many precious ingredients, bruised and burnt together, and all of divine appointment.

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## **The Sunday School Teacher's Guide**

By John Angell James, 1816

### **TEMPTATIONS TO WHICH SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS ARE PECULIARLY EXPOSED**

As this life is a state of probation, it might be reasonably expected that every situation will have its trials. Temptations vary with our circumstances—but there is no scene from which they are entirely excluded. The heavenly, and the earthly paradise, alternately witnessed their attack, their victory, and their havoc. Angelic, as well as human perfection, yielded to their shock, and left a warning to every subsequent age, "not to be high minded—but to fear." In a world which God for a while has permitted to sink under the dominion of the prince of the power of the air, it is not to be wondered at that **there is no situation, however obscured by solitude, or elevated by piety, from which all temptations can be effectually shut out.** The fact is, that as our chief danger arises from our own evil heart, until we can be separated from our guilty selves we shall look in vain for a spot sequestered from the attack of our spiritual enemies. Well did our merciful Redeemer know our weakness and our dangers, when he put into our lips that appropriate petition, "lead us not into temptation."

What duty is more frequently enjoined in the New Testament, than WATCHFULNESS, and what is more necessary? How incumbent this is, on those who are engaged in the active duties of a Sunday School, will be very apparent, by even a partial enumeration of their temptations.

**1. They are in great danger of receiving injury to their own personal religion.**

The Sunday, if the expression should not be thought too low, is the 'market day of the soul'—when she lays in the provisions which are to refresh her, and the materials which are to employ her, during the ensuing week. If this day be misimproved, six days suffer for the neglect of one. It is very true, that real godliness will not confine itself to peculiar times and places. But still there are both peculiar times and places which are eminently adapted to promote its life and power. The Sunday and the sanctuary sustain the highest rank among the instituted means of religious benefit.

It is then that the Christian, engaged in warfare with this world, like a conflicting vessel at sea, lies aside for a season, to repair the damages he has received, and prepare again for action, by renewing the faith which gives him the victory. It is then that piety, wearied and weakened by the toils of her warfare, sits down to rest beneath the shadow of Christ's ordinances, and refreshing herself with the river of life, which flows at her feet, rises with renovated strength to pursue her journey to the city of habitation. Hence all those who are concerned for the prosperity of their spiritual interests, and are wise in the selection of means to promote them, set a high value upon the Sunday, as a chief means of grace of true religion.

Now without great care a Sunday School teacher is in imminent danger of losing much of the benefit of the Christian Sunday. As your attendance is required pretty early at the school, you are often exposed to the temptation of neglecting secret prayer on the Sunday morning. Without a most resolute and self-denying habit of early rising, you will be very frequently hurried away to the school before you have had time, except in a very hasty manner, to supplicate a blessing from God upon the services of the day. **A Sunday that commences without prayer, is likely to be spent without pleasure, and closed without profit.** It is in the closet that the soul is prepared for the blessings of the sanctuary. It is there the understanding is cleared for instruction, and the heart softened for impression. It is there that God excites the spiritual hunger and thirst, which he afterwards intends to satisfy with the provision of his holy temple. Everyone that wishes to find the Sunday a delight,

should introduce it by a season of earnest, and secret prayer, which you, without most determined habits of early rising, are in consequence of your engagements, to neglect.

Without great vigilance you are in danger of *losing the spirituality of the Sunday altogether, and making it rather a day of business—rather than of devotion.* In many large schools much of the Laucasterian system of education is introduced into the method of instruction; and which certainly facilitates the communication of theoretical knowledge. But at the same time it must be confessed, that from its very nature, it has rather a tendency, without pre-eminent care on the part of the teacher; to increase the 'secularizing influence' of the whole concern of instruction. The audible repetition of orders, the evolutions of the classes, the exhibition of signals, and indeed the whole mechanism of the plan—has a great tendency to destroy that tranquility and spirituality of mind which are essential to the exercises of devotion.

In addition to this, the little vexations and irritations which the conduct of the scholars so frequently produces, are very apt to disturb and upset the most amiable temper—and thus disqualify the soul for that enjoyment, which requires the most serene and unruffled atmosphere. The body too, often grows weary, and the animal spirits flag; under such circumstances you sometimes enter upon the means of grace—but ill prepared to improve them. The service passes on, while, alas! neither the solemnity of prayer, nor the animating notes of holy praise; neither the fervor of the preacher, nor the seriousness of the surrounding congregation—seems to interest or impress you. And then mourning the coldness and barrenness of your heart, you retire to mark upon the gloomy chronicle of misimprovement another Sunday lost.

Many a heart will subscribe to the truth of this representation by a deep and heavy sigh, and many a tongue be ready to exclaim, "my wasting piety yields sad proof, that without watchfulness, genuine godliness may receive lamentable injury even in a Sunday School! **But tell me how I may GUARD against the danger, its existence I know without being told?"**

Begin the day as I have already directed, with earnest prayer, that you may carry a devotional spirit to your labors. Seriously remember your danger, and diligently watch against it. Keep in view the ultimate object of your exertions, and elevate your pursuits from the mere communication of knowledge, to the salvation of the immortal soul—as long as you can fix your mind on the spiritual interests of the children, and labor affectionately for them, you guard against the secularizing influence of the ordinary school business, and are cherishing a spirit every way friendly to your own piety. Make it the subject of earnest supplication, that God would preserve you from the danger to which you are exposed. Endeavor to acquire settled habits of stillness and order, that all unnecessary bustle may be avoided, and everything conducted with calmness and serenity. Employ the time you have to spare during the intervals of public worship, in devotional retirement. By these means, assiduously applied, the spirit of true piety may be preserved, and personal religion remain uninjured amidst the routine of Sunday School instruction.

There is another source from whence some degree of danger may be apprehended, and that is ***a habit of speaking on religious subjects, with too much indifference and levity.*** This applies to everyone who is called to teach religion officially. The solemn topics of heavenly truth, can never be treated lightly, with impunity. A mind accustomed to dwell upon them in a mere official and unfeeling manner, must gradually lose its susceptibility to their living influence; and become hardened against their power to sanctify and comfort. That which at one time we treat as the ordinary routine of business, it will be difficult at another to enjoy as the element of devotion. Let us then take care never to handle the truths of revelation with a light and careless touch; for by such means they are likely to become "the savor of death unto death." "The solemn awe, which warns us how we touch a holy thing," should ever imbue our minds while the topics of eternity are trembling on our tongues. Never forget, that 'everlasting interests' hang upon the truths which you teach to the children, and that their manner of learning them, in a considerable measure, will be an imitation of your manner of teaching them.

There is the greater need of watching against the danger to which your own personal piety is exposed from your office as a teacher—as of all causes of spiritual declension—this is the most likely to be excused by a deceived conscience. Is the following mode of reasoning new to you? "It is true I have not been of late so attentive to personal religion as I formerly was, and it must be confessed that divine truths affect me less powerfully than they once did. But as the neglect was produced by an attention to the interests of others, it is quite pardonable, for if I have not kept my own vineyard I have kept the vineyards of others; and therefore I consider that my falling off a little should be considered rather in the light of a sacrifice, than a sin."

It behooves us however, to recollect that our first care is with our own soul, and that as no duties can be incompatible with each other, nothing is required of us that necessarily interferes with personal piety. Nothing can possibly be a substitute for this; nothing excuse the decline of it. The most diffusive benevolence, nor the most ardent zeal—will not be accepted by God as an apology for sinking into the crime of lukewarmness. There is however no *necessary* connection between a decay of piety, and the duties of a Sunday School—the danger arises only in those cases where there is a lack of caution; properly conducted, your employment would be found rather an auxiliary than a foe to the most spiritual mind.

## **2. Another temptation to which Sunday School teachers are exposed, is a spirit of PRIDE.**

To be a teacher of others; to be invested with authority; to be regarded as an oracle; to be listened to with deference; to say to one 'come,' and he comes, to another 'go,' and he goes, even among children—is a situation which has its temptations, and which some weak minds have found quite too powerful for the growth of *humility*. You mistake, if you suppose the distinction and elevation of your office, are too inconsiderable to induce pride. Pride is a vice that does not dwell exclusively in king's houses, wear only elegant clothing, and feed sumptuously every day upon lofty titles,

fame or affluence. Pride is generated in the depravity of our nature, it accommodates itself to our circumstances, and adapts itself to our taste—it is found as often in the poor cottage, as in the mansion; and never having tasted the richer provisions of loftier elevations—feeds with avidity upon the lowest distinctions, which raise one man above another. Consciousness of superiority, whatever be the object of comparison, is the element of this most hateful disposition of pride; and this may be supplied even from the office of a Sunday School teacher.

The danger is greatly increased, where the talents of a young person have procured for him a prominent station, and assigned to him the discharge of extraordinary duties. It would indeed be an unhappy abuse of the system, if it should be perverted into a means of destroying that modest, and retiring disposition, which is the most attractive ornament of the young, and rendering them bold, forward and conceited; a danger, which it requires no penetration to discern, must ever attend a season like that in which we live, of extraordinary activity.

The mode of doing good in the present age, with all its incalculable advantages to the interests of mankind at large, needs the greatest watchfulness, both on the part of its principal agents, and its subordinate instruments, lest it generate the prideful disposition, against which this particular warning is directed. Vast multitudes are now brought from silence and obscurity, to sustain in public a share of that distinguished honor, which the cause of Christ imparts to the lowest of its advocates. Let them therefore be watchful of their own spirit, for the loss of humility is a destruction in the Christian character, not to be repaired by the most splendid talents, or the most active zeal. While at the same time it would be an evil which our congregations would have cause to deplore with tears of blood, if their younger members should ever be inflated by any cause with the spirit of pride.

**3. Nearly allied to this is the danger of acquiring a dogmatic, authoritative and overbearing manner.**

The previous particular temptation referred to *spirit*; this more directly relates to *manner*—for it is quite conceivable that through the force of habit a person may acquire dogmatic manner, without being considerably infected by a prideful spirit. Accustomed to speak with authority to the children, and to expect prompt obedience to your commands, you are in danger, without great watchfulness, of carrying the tone and air of office into your general deportment. A habit of dogmatic and overbearing manner—may be formed by imperceptible degrees, displayed without consciousness, and not broken without difficulty. Wherever it exists it never fails to create disgust—but is never so disgusting as in young people.

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## The Sunday School Teacher's Guide

By John Angell James, 1816

### THE DISCOURAGEMENTS OF SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS

Every cause which is worth supporting, will have to encounter difficulties—and these are generally proportionate to the value of the object to be accomplished. The career of benevolence is not a path of flowers, leading down a gentle slope; where the philanthropist treads softly and swiftly without a *difficulty* to check his progress--or a *discouragement* to chill his ardor. 'Mercy' has far more to obstruct her course than even 'justice', since the latter is attended by the strong arm of power, to resent the injuries which are offered to her dignity, and remove the obstacles which oppose her progress. Whereas MERCY, accompanied only by that wisdom which is peaceable, must attempt to do by gentleness, what she cannot effect by force; toil through *difficulties* which she cannot remove; and under the most aggravated injuries, console herself with the thought that she did not deserve them; and amidst present *discouragement*, cheer herself with the hope of future success; and after waiting long and patiently for the fruit of the labors, sometimes find her only reward--in the purity of her intentions and the consciousness of having done all she could.

The faithful teacher will meet with many discouragements, which I will now enumerate, and endeavor to alleviate.

#### 1. His discouragement will arise frequently from the CHILDREN.

—From their **DULLNESS**. Instead of finding them quick in their conceptions, and steady in their application--you will often find them volatile in their habits, and slow of

apprehension. After toiling several weeks in teaching them the alphabet, you will in some cases have the discouragement to find that little progress has been made--and months elapse before much visible improvement takes place. In looking round upon your class, you will sometimes exclaim with the sigh of despondency, "So long have I been laboring to instruct that boy, and yet to the present hour he can scarcely add syllable to syllable. It is like ploughing upon a rock, and sowing precious seed upon sand. I feel almost inclined to abandon the work altogether." Never yield to such feelings. Innumerable instances have occurred, in which the dullest children in the school have ultimately become the teacher's richest reward. Plants of great excellence are often of slow growth, and pay with ample interests the gardener's heavy toil, and delayed expectations. And even should no such result crown your ends, still bear with their dullness, recollecting that this very circumstance renders them more needful of your benevolent regard.

—Their **INGRATITUDE** is oftentimes exceedingly discouraging. Aware of the costly sacrifices you make, and the incessant labor you endure for their benefit, you expect in them a just sense of their advantages and a grateful their obligations. Instead of this, you see them utterly destitute of both—trifling over their privileges as if they were worth nothing to them--and as thankless towards you, as if it cost nothing to impart them! Perceiving that your kindness is wasted upon objects which it fails to impress--you feel sometimes disposed to withdraw your exertions, which are so little valued and improved.

But consider that this very state of the children's minds, instead of inducing you to relax your exertions, should stimulate you to greater activity, since it is a part of that depravity of heart and that deformity of character, for the removal of which they are entrusted to your care. To abandon them on this account, would be like the physician's giving up his patient because he is diseased. The more insensible and ungrateful you find them, the more should you labor for their improvement, since these vices, if not reformed in childhood, are likely to attain a dreadful maturity in future life.

—Their **MISIMPROVEMENT** operates very unfavorably upon the mind of their instructors. Who has not sometimes experienced a chilling depression, when he has looked round upon the school at large, and compared the actual state of the children--with the advantages they have enjoyed! How common are such reflections as these—"Alas! how few of these children appear at present to be the better, as to any moral improvement, for the instructions they have received. How few have received any serious impressions, or imbibed any pious principles. How many appear just as depraved--as when they entered the school, and are leaving it without a single proof on which a teacher can rest his hope that they are really the better for his instructions. And even of those who at one time seemed to promise well, how few are there whose budding excellences have escaped the corrupting influence of bad example. Disappointed so often, we are afraid to indulge another expectation. Where are the boasted advantages of Sunday School instruction? Where the general improvement of mind, of manners, and of heart, for which we have been waiting? The mass of the present generation of the poor seem to be growing up as wicked and immoral as any that are past. We have labored almost in vain, and spent our strength for nothing! It amounts well near to a question with us, whether we may not relinquish our efforts without any serious injury to the interests of morality or true religion."

This is the dark side of the picture. But it has a bright one, which should check these discouraging apprehensions, and resist the paralyzing influence they are calculated to nourish. That in a great majority of cases no present visible effect, of a pious kind, is produced, I admit. But equally obvious it is, that in not a few instances this happy result has been witnessed. Could you look at the aggregate of success, which has already followed these exertions, you would behold a scene which would fix your attention in silent wonder--or elevate your heart into transports of delight.

It is a fact which abundant evidence confirms, that multitudes of children have already been converted to God, blessed for both worlds, and made happy for eternity--by means of Sunday School instruction. At the very moment

when you are giving vent to the sighs of disappointment, and yielding to the influence of despondency, a thousand harps are struck in heaven by a band of glorified spirits, who received their first devout impressions in a Sunday School. Could you listen to their harmony, and gaze upon their beauty—could you witness the seraphic glow which is diffused over their frame, and hear the rapturous praises which they pour forth to him that sits upon the throne, as often as they repeat the honored name of their beloved teacher--discouragement before such a scene would instantly vanish, and animated hope would fill its place. When you feel despondency creeping through your soul, send your imagination for one of these heavenly harpers, and by the song of her conversion, let her charm away the gloomy thoughts of your troubled bosom!

*On the way to heaven, as well as within its gates--are a goodly company, redeemed from their vain and evil lives--within the confines of a Sunday School. Scarcely a Christian church will be found in the kingdom, that has had such an institution under its care—but records some members who by these means were converted from the error of their ways. The number of living witnesses, who, from heartfelt experience, can bear their testimony to the spiritual benefit of this system, would perhaps more than fill one of our largest places of public worship.*

In addition to this, numberless instances of *external reformation* have occurred, and many who would otherwise have been running to excess of riot, have been trained to habits of morality, industry, and cleanliness.

In many cases, the seed of the kingdom has begun to germinate long before your eye discerns the hidden process. A secret work is going on, perhaps, which shall one day surprise and delight you. The first dawn of day commences amidst the thickest shadows of night; the tide begins to turn long before it is observed by a person walking upon the shore; thus the incipient stage of conversion is often lost, to every eye but His which sees in secret, amidst the remains of unregeneracy. When you are most discouraged--there may be the least cause for it.

Even those unhappy youths whose conduct excludes all joy for the present, and almost all hope for the future--even they, at some distant time, may yield a rich harvest from the seed which is now, with respect to them, sown in tears. The instructions you communicate can never be totally forgotten. They give light and power to conscience; keep the mind in a state of susceptibility to devout impression, and render the heart more tangible to those incidents of a providential nature which are continually occurring to arrest the sinner in his career. In the gloomy season of distress, when reflection can be resisted no longer--then what they were taught in your class, may be brought most vividly to remembrance. Then, when no preacher, and no friend is near, conscience may denounce the terrors of the law, and memory the glad tidings of the gospel, until the poor trembling sinner, amidst the long neglected stores that were deposited in her mind at the Sunday School, finds the means of her conviction, conversion, and consolation.

It may be also observed, that those people are far more likely than others, to receive benefit from the public preaching of the gospel--whose minds have been previously trained in the knowledge of its principles. They have a clearer understanding of the sermons which they hear. It is through the mind that God converts the heart--so they are in a fairer way to derive spiritual impression than people who have lived in the most brutish ignorance. This is a species of advantage arising from Sunday School instruction not sufficiently thought of. The teacher is unquestionably a powerful auxiliary to the preacher, and the success of the latter in many cases must in justice be shared by the former. You may therefore check the despondency of your hearts, with this consideration, that where no present visible effect is produced by your instructions--you may be preparing its subject for this great change of conversion, which is afterwards to be effected under the instrumentality of the minister.

Children, in whose hearts devout impression may have been produced, are often removed from beneath your care--before you have an opportunity to witness the fruit of your toil! But the eye of God is upon his own work, and he will in eternity, make known to you all that he does by you.

As to the discouragement which arises from the general appearance of the lower orders of society it should be recollected, that a mighty change indeed must be wrought before it becomes visible in the aggregate; which ought not to be expected until the system has had the range of another generation or two, to work upon the mass of the poor with the weight of accumulated benefit. Thousands and thousands of instances of individual conversion and reformation may be effected, without at present altering the *visible* condition of the poor in general. *Wickedness* is noisy and obtrusive, and may be seen and heard in every place of concourse. *Piety* is silent, modest, and retiring; not lifting up her voice in the street, nor praying at the corners of the streets. One murder makes more noise, and gathers more attention--than a hundred conversions. To see the abounding of wickedness, the overflowing of ungodliness, we need not give ourselves the trouble of research—but to witness the good effects of Sunday Schools, we must follow the subjects of them to the closet of devotion, and to the retired scenes of domestic life and social order, where, like the violet, they are to be traced rather by their fragrance than their aromas, and are valued in private more, than they are known in public.

## **2. A second source of discouragement is often found in the conduct of the children's PARENTS.**

It is extremely disheartening to meet with so little cooperation as is generally afforded by them; this however should produce double exertions on your part, by convincing you that the children are cast entirely on your mercy, for pious and moral improvement.

The same insensibility and ingratitude as are displayed by the children, are also in many cases manifested by their parents. It is not uncommon to meet with people so stupidly thankless, as to talk of conferring obligations upon us--by sending their children to our schools. Such monstrous ingratitude is exceedingly trying to your benevolence, and sometimes nearly extinguishes it. Let not the children, however, suffer for the sins of their parents. Continue to

nourish their interests, and promote their welfare in opposition to every discouragement. Remember you profess that your efforts are perfectly gratuitous, and therefore to be consistent you should make them dependent upon no wages--not even the effusions of a grateful heart. Do good for its own sake, and let your reward arise from the consciousness of doing it. A good man shall be satisfied from himself. Imitate the conduct of your adorable Redeemer, who ever went about doing good--amidst a degree of horrid insensibility and vile ingratitude, sufficient one should have thought, to make 'infinite mercy' herself weary in well doing.

**3. Sometimes you are cast down by the unconcern which is manifested by the SENIOR, and more respectable members of the church.** It can never be sufficiently deplored that so large a fund of knowledge, wisdom, and experience as is to be found in the senior branches of many of our congregations, should be entirely withheld from the interests of the children. And the regret is considerably increased by observing the total indifference with which such people frequently regard the whole concerns of the school. This arises from a mistaken idea that these things belong exclusively to the young. Is there anything, I would ask, in this business, which would render it a disgrace for the most affluent, aged, or pious members of our churches--to display a solicitude in its prosperity? Did even the Savior of the world interest himself in the care of young children--and can *any one* of his followers think such a concern beneath him?

I am not now asking the aged to sit down upon the floor with the young--or to sustain the toils of labor amidst the infirmities of old age. I am not urging the father to neglect the souls of his own offspring, in order to instruct the children of the stranger. All I ask, all I wish, is that they would discover a lively and constant solicitude in the welfare of the school--and give it as much of their time and their attention as their bodily strength would allow, and prior claims admit. The hoary crown of a righteous older person, occasionally seen within the precincts of the school, sheds a luster upon the institution, and encourages the ardor of youthful bosoms. The children are awed, the teachers are

animated by the occasional assistance of men whose standing in the church, and ripened piety, command respect. Where this, however, is unhappily denied, and the young are left without the counsel of old age to guide them, or its smile to reward them--instead of yielding to the discouragement, endeavor by your own renewed exertions to remedy the evil, and supply the defect. The less others care for the children--the more concern to be diligent should operate in your heart.

#### **4. The mind of a teacher is very often discouraged by the lack of efficient cooperation in his FELLOW-LABORERS.**

Perhaps you are lamenting that your co-workers are either too few in number, or lamentably defective in suitable qualifications. Plans of usefulness which you know are adapted to promote the great end are opposed, or counteracted by the ignorance and stubbornness of your fellow-teachers. You are left almost to struggle alone. You cannot do the things you would. Thwarted and impeded, you are often ready to quit the field where your operations are cramped, and your usefulness diminished. The reason for your resignation is however--the strongest for your continuance. The fewer there are to carry on the cause, or the more slender their qualifications are, the more criminal would it be in you to retire. This would be to forsake the cause in its emergency, and take your place among the mere friends of its prosperity. Nothing can be more noble than to see a man struggling the more, for a benevolent object, the more he is opposed by some, and neglected by others. It is the glory and triumph of great minds—a sort of heroism in the cause of mercy. Perseverance may bring its reward with it by collecting round you, in process of time--a band of laborers like minded, who will rejoice to put themselves under the direction of such a leader!

## **The Sunday School Teacher's Guide**

By John Angell James, 1816

### **THE MOST EFFECTUAL MEANS OF KEEPING UP ZEAL**

It is a fact which all experience proves, that the most important object, by being constantly in sight, loses much of its power to interest. **Zeal** is apt to languish, when it is no longer excited by the stimulus of novelty—and the fervor of first love, without great care, will soon sink into dull formality. It is not to be wondered at, if among the active supporters of a Sunday School, the vice of lukewarmness should sometimes be found. Hence it is of importance to ascertain the best means for keeping up the zeal of the teacher's office. By this I mean, *the prosecution of its duties with vigor, interest, and delight*—in opposition to that lifeless and indolent manner of dragging through them which is but too common with many.

#### **1. Keep in view the ultimate object of your labors.**

The more importance we attach to an object, the less danger we shall be exposed to, of ceasing to regard it with solicitude. Whatever is momentous, must be interesting. Hence the necessity of keeping steadily and clearly before your mind, the salvation of the soul, as the ultimate end of all your efforts. What can have such a tendency to engage the feelings, and keep them engaged, as this? The mere endeavor to teach them reading or writing; the effort at only intellectual improvement, cannot in the very nature of things have such power over the heart of the teacher—as the steady contemplation of the immortal soul's salvation as a noble prize—and eternity as a wonderful excitement. If anything can keep up the spirit of the office, it is to bring the mind from time to time under the influence of such inducements as these. When you feel your heart losing its ardor, and sinking into a lukewarm state, look afresh to the world of immortality, and behold in the crown of eternal life,

the object of your pursuit. If anything can keep your attention alive to the interests of the children, it will be the constant repetition of this sentiment—"I am seeking their everlasting salvation!"

## **2. Well conducted Sunday School Unions have a powerful tendency to promote the spirit of your office.**

The occasional meeting of fellow laborers from different schools, together with the interesting communications and mutual exhortations which are then delivered, have a very enlivening effect. The very sight of so large a body of fellow teachers, engaged in the same cause, has an exhilarating tendency, especially when one and another details the results of successful exertions. Not only do neighboring flames brighten each other's blaze—but even dying embers upon the hearth, by being brought into contact mutually rekindle the expiring spark. Thus the communion which is established by these associations, promotes, in a very powerful manner, the feelings essential to the character of a good teacher. A holy emulation is also excited, which, if it does not degenerate into envy, leads on to the happiest effects. The annual meetings which are necessarily connected with the union, aid the general impression, and keep up the interest in an eminent degree. It has been universally admitted by those who have tried the plan, that it is pregnant with advantages to that particular object which I am now considering. The teachers who are connected with the best regulated unions, can testify, from ample experience, to their adaptation in keeping up the spirit of the office.

## **3. Occasional meetings among the teachers of the same school, for conversation and prayer, in immediate reference to their joint labors, are exceedingly beneficial.**

At these meetings everything should be communicated which occurs in the course of individual experience, that is at all calculated for general encouragement. Each one should feel himself under obligation to render these friendly interviews as interesting as he can, by making known everything he sees, or hears, or reads, that is of an

instructive, or stimulating nature; especially taking care that nothing is done for the sake of vain glory or pride, as it would effectually counteract their beneficial influence—to have them converted into occasions for display.

**4. Ministerial assistance, in the way of exhortation, inspection, and advice, would powerfully contribute to keep up the true spirit of the office.**

Engage your respective ministers to meet you occasionally in your social interviews, that by the breath of animated exhortation they might fan the expiring spark, and feed the holy fire. Accustomed to public admonition, they know how to touch the springs of action, and to awaken the dormant energies of the human mind. It is no pride in me to say, that if a minister's heart is engaged in the work, and he is respected by his people, he has it in his power to awaken an interest in the minds of the teachers which scarcely anything else can supply. Use every means therefore to engage his zealous concern in the welfare of the institution.

It is matter of great surprise and equal regret, that many ministers appear to take little or no interest in the concerns of the Sunday Schools supported by their congregations. They are scarcely ever to be seen among the children, or affording their presence and instruction at the meetings of the teachers. The annual sermon which they preach for the benefit of the institution, seems to be regarded by them as a legal discharge from all further obligation to intervene on its behalf—and until they sit down to compose their sermon for the next anniversary it is neglected and forgotten. To what can such an omission be attributed? They can scarcely imagine that a school containing two, three, or four hundred immortal souls, is an object below their notice, or beyond their duty—nor will they shelter themselves under the excuse that when they undertook the charge of the congregation, they did not stipulate to concern themselves about the school. Does it comport with that zeal and pity by which they profess to be moved—to hear of so many immortal souls, most of them grossly ignorant, and wicked, assembled every week within the sphere of their labors, for religious instruction—and yet scarcely ever inquire how they are going on? Do not such ministers strangely neglect the

means of increasing their own personal influence, who allow so important an institution to be in constant operation amidst their people, and yet have little or no share in directing its movements? Is it not teaching their congregations to act independently of their pastors, and to diminish the weight of their office, already in the estimation of many far too light? Do they consult the interests of the church by neglecting those of the Sunday School? If a proper share of attention were given to those poor youths, in all probability its happy result would often prove a balm to heal the wounds occasioned by a lack of ministerial success. Here they would find materials to build up their dilapidated churches, and strengthen the walls of Zion, which have been long moldering beneath the desolating ravages of death. It is true, in many cases the pastor's hands are already nearly full of cares, and his arms weighed down with the interests suspended upon them—but the duty I enjoin would add little to the number or the weight of his engagements, while it would add much to his influence, his usefulness, and his comfort.

**5. A constant perusal of publications that relate to Sunday School instruction, especially the details of successful exertion, would be exceedingly useful.**

Any particular taste is vigorously stimulated by the perusal of books that treat of its appropriate subject. Be ever watchful therefore to meet with new information and facts illustrative of the advantages of the work in which you are engaged. You rise from reading an encouraging anecdote, with fresh eagerness. You see what others do and how they do it—thus, while you are directed, you are also excited. I recommend, with peculiar earnestness, the 'Teacher's Magazine', already alluded to in the introduction, as eminently adapted to preserve in your bosom the true spirit of your office.

**6. An imitation of the best examples would promote the same end.**

In every school we shall find some whose superior qualifications and zeal entitle them to be considered as models. Instead of observing them with envy, mark them

with admiration, cultivate their acquaintance, and endeavor, by the glowing ardor of *their* spirit, to re-ignite the fervor of your own.

**7. Occasionally devoting a portion of time to examine the state of the mind in reference to your duties, would be a means of improvement.**

It should be impressed upon your mind, that there is in the human spirit—a lamentable propensity to lukewarmness, which can be effectually roused only by a violent and perpetual struggle with ourselves. The true spirit of religion is very powerfully assisted by extraordinary seasons of devotion. The attention is more arrested and fixed by what is unusual, than what occurs in the ordinary routine of customary engagements. Half an hour occasionally devoted to a serious examination of the state of the heart, in reference to the object you have embraced, when you could deliberately survey its magnitude, ascertain the manner in which it should be regarded, recollect the way in which it had been pursued by you—would rouse your zeal from its slumber, stimulate your heart to fresh activity, and be attended with the happiest effects.

To all that I have enjoined, should be added a constant supplication at the throne of divine grace, that God, by his Holy Spirit, would keep alive in your heart those feelings of holy benevolence and pious zeal in which the spirit of the office essentially consists.

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## The Sunday School Teacher's Guide

By John Angell James, 1816

### MOTIVES TO DILIGENCE IN THE WORK

If, in addition to what has been already advanced, anything is still lacking to stimulate your zeal, yield your hearts to the influence of the following motives—

**1. Dwell upon the value of Sunday Schools to all the present interests of SOCIETY.** As Britons and as Christians, you must love the country that gave you birth—and that man is unworthy to tread the soil, or breathe the air of England, who is insensible to blessings of this "bright speck upon the bosom of the ocean." Now, if we love our country, we must desire to see her **great** amidst the nations of the earth; **safe** amidst her greatness; and **happy** in her safety. And who needs to be informed, that wisdom and knowledge must be the stability of her times? Her greatness, her safety, and her happiness, all rest upon the moral character of her population. Whatever elevates this, exalts the nation. Next to the labors of an evangelical ministry, no plan that ever was devised, has a greater tendency to improve the religious state of society, than the institution of Sunday Schools.

**Sunday Schools lessen the CRIMES which disturb its peace.** It is to be recollected, that the instruction communicated by you is strictly *moral* and *religious*. How far mere general knowledge, independently of revelation, would operate in improving the moral character of a people, we can scarcely presume to determine, because the experiment has never been tried. But that the communication of *Scriptural* knowledge has a most beneficial tendency, it would be ridiculous to attempt to prove. It may be useful, however, here to remind you of those great national facts which are so often appealed to, in illustration of the good effects of religious education among the poor. It is generally known and allowed that Scotland, and the low counties of it

in particular, are distinguished from all other parts of the British empire, by the attention which is bestowed on early education, and the provision which is made for the wide and regular diffusion of its benefits. It is provided by law in Scotland, that there shall be a school established, and a master appointed in every parish. Many additional schools are also founded by donations and legacies; so that in the southern parts of the kingdom, it is very rare to find a person who cannot both read and write; and it is deemed scandalous not to be possessed of a bible. Now what are the effects of all this upon the national character and habits of the Scotch, and on the morals and order of society? It is principally owing to this, says Mr. Howard the philanthropist, that the numerous emigrants from that country, dispersed over almost all Europe, appear with credit, and advance themselves in their several stations. From the tables of the same justly celebrated writer, it appears that in the whole of Scotland, whose population was estimated to amount to be at least one million, six hundred thousand souls, only one hundred and thirty-four people were convicted of 'capital crimes' in a period of nineteen years; being on the average, about seven in each year. In a subsequent table we are informed, that in the single circuit of Norfolk, in England, including six counties, and containing, it is supposed, not more than eight hundred thousand people, being but one half of the population of Scotland, no less than four hundred and thirty-four criminals were condemned to death in the space of twenty three years—which is an annual average of nearly nineteen capital convicts, besides eight hundred and seventy-four sentenced to exile. The *double* population of Scotland being taken into the account, there is thus a difference in its favor, in this important point, in the ratio of seven to thirty-eight. (Extracted from Mr. Jabez Bunting's Sermon, preached before the members of the Sunday School Union.)

Now it should be observed, that the education in Scotland to which this superiority may be attributed, embraces much that is moral and pious, although there is reason to fear that of late years some relaxation has taken place.

If we pass over to Ireland, we shall find the darkest part of the empire, with respect to education, the most prolific of

crimes and miseries. The wretched state of that unhappy country is in a considerable degree to be traced up to the prevalence of a superstitious religion, which withholds education from the poor.

Consider then what benefits you are conferring upon society by promoting the religious education of the poor. But besides the **crimes** which are cognizable by human laws, you are the happy instruments of lessening the prevalence of that multitude of **vices**, which although amenable only at the bar of God, convulse society to its center, and spread suffering and misery through all its walks. Profanity and falsehood; drunkenness and debauchery; excessive rage and ungoverned malignity; and all the dispositions that in the different social relations render man a fend to man, it may be reasonably hoped, are considerably diminished by the influence of your benevolent exertions.

**On the outer hand, Sunday Schools multiply the VIRTUES that establish the comfort of society.** All the particular duties that arise out of the reciprocal ties of society are inculcated, while the general principles of benevolence and submission, which like two mighty columns support the whole fabric of ours social concerns—are deeply founded in the human bosom. Although the general aspect of society, in its lower classes, appears as yet unchanged, and the wintry face of its morality, at present, seems to throw to a great distance the harvest of your zeal—still let it be a stimulus to your exertions, to be assured that you are pouring the principle of moral fertility through a thousand channels, and that already you see here and there a spring flower lifting its head amidst barrenness and storms, the welcome harbinger of a happier season. Already innumerable masters bless your labors for faithful servants—wives pour out their gratitude for industrious and affectionate husbands, and children, as they gather round the knees of a kind and tender father, well-clad, well-fed, well-taught—turn to you with the thankful smiles of their bliss, as their benefactors, who made their parents what they are. Society, through all its ranks, gratefully acknowledges the obligations conferred by your labors, and earnestly solicits their continuance. The king from his throne, and the senate in full convention, have paid the

tribute of admiration to the utility of your exertions. You are acknowledged to be some of the best friends of the community, and the most efficient philanthropists of the poor. Your efforts are directed to prevent crimes—instead of punishing them; and to prevent misery—instead of merely relieving it. Pursue your labors with increasing diligence, since their tendency is to strengthen the foundations, and adorn the fabric of society.

**2. Dwell upon the incalculable worth of immortal souls.** So far as the children are individually concerned, I again remind you, that their temporal interests are the lowest object of pursuit. Your ultimate and highest end is the salvation of the immortal soul. This is *your* aim, to be instrumental in converting the souls of the children from the error of their ways, and training them up in the fear of God—for everlasting glory! What an object! The immortal soul! The salvation of the human spirit! The soul was the last and noblest work of God in the formation of the world; the finish and ornament of this material fabric, on which the divine architect bestowed his most mature deliberation, and expended his richest treasures. It stood amidst creation the fair and beauteous image of the Creator. This was the object which upon his expulsion from Paradise, first caught the envious eye of Satan, and in the spoils of which his malice sought a fiend-like solace for the loss of heaven. This was the object which in its fall dragged the creation into a vortex of ruin. This was the object selected by the great God in the councils of eternity, whose salvation should be the means of exhibiting to the universe the most glorious display of his divine perfections. This was the object on which his mercy, wisdom, and power were to exhaust their united resources. This was the object for which the Son of God could justify himself to all worlds—as not demeaning his dignity, or disparaging his wisdom, when for its salvation he veiled his divinity in human flesh, was made lower than the angels for a while, tabernacled amidst the sorrows of mortality, and closed a life of humiliation and suffering upon the ignominious summit of the cross. This is the object for which all the revelations of heaven, and all the dispensations of grace; all the labors of prophets, priests, and apostles—in short, all the splendid apparatus of redemption, was arranged. This is the object whose interests render angels

unquiet upon their heavenly seats, and draw them with exquisite solicitude to minister to its safety. Such is the retinue attending upon the soul of man, into whose train you have fallen.

What then must be the value of the human soul! Now you see the justice of our savior's language—"What is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Now you perceive this is no hyperbole, and that literally the globe weighed against the value of one human soul—is less than the small dust of the balance. Convert the sun into one blazing diamond, the moon into an exquisite pearl, and every star that decks the skies into a gemstone—all this bears no proportion to the value of a soul. Arithmetic, with all its powers, is here of no use; it cannot aid our conceptions. Think of the *immortality* of the soul, and this one property of its nature raises it above all calculation. It is in consequence of *this*, that it has been said with justice, that the salvation of a soul amounts to a greater sum of happiness, than the temporal deliverance of an empire for a thousand ages, for the latter will come to an end—but not the former. By the same argument the loss of one soul is a greater catastrophe than the sum total of all the temporal misery endured upon the face of the globe from the period of the fall, to the final and universal conflagration! Say now—is not such an object worthy all the means that are, or can be employed for its attainment? Do you hesitate? Ponder, intensely ponder again. The subject can never be exhausted; the more it is studied, the wider will its compass appear. Should you be the happy instrument of converting but one soul to God, what honor are you providing for yourselves, what happiness for others!

My imagination has sometimes presented me with this picture of a faithful teacher's entrance to the state of her everlasting rest. The agony of death finished, the triumph of faith completed—and the conquering spirit hastening to her crown. Upon the confines of the heavenly world, a form divinely lovely awaits her arrival. Enrapt in astonishment at the dazzling glory of this celestial inhabitant, and as yet a stranger in the world of spirits, she inquires, "Is this Gabriel, chief of all the heavenly multitudes—and am I honored with

*his aid to guide me to the throne of God?" With a smile of ineffable delight, such as gives fresh beauty to an angel's countenance, the mystic form replies, "Do you remember little Elizabeth, who was in yonder world, a pupil in your Sunday school class? Do you recollect the child who wept as you talked to her of sin—and directed her to the cross of the dying Redeemer? God smiled with approbation upon your effort, and by his own Spirit sealed the impression upon her heart in characters never to be effaced. Providence removed her from beneath your care, before the fruit of your labor was visible. The gospel seed, however, had taken root, and it was the business of another to water what you had sown. Nourished by the influence of heaven, the plant of piety flourished in her heart, and shed its fragrance upon her character. Piety, after guarding her from the snares of youth, cheered her amidst the accumulated trials of an afflicted life, supported her amidst the agonies of her last conflict, and elevated her to the mansions of immortality! And now behold before you, the glorified spirit of that poor child, who under God owes the eternal life on which she has lately entered, to your faithful labors in the Sunday School; and who is now sent by our Redeemer to introduce you to the world of glory, as your first and least reward for guiding the once thoughtless, ignorant, wicked Elizabeth to the world of grace! Hail, happy spirit! Hail, favored of the Lord! Hail, deliverer of my soul! Hail, to the world of eternal glory!"*

I can trace the scene no further. I cannot paint the raptures produced in the honored teacher's bosom by this unexpected encounter. I cannot depict the mutual gratitude and love of two such spirits meeting on the confines of heaven, much less can I follow them to their everlasting mansion, and disclose the bliss which they shall enjoy before the throne of God!

All this, and a thousand times more, is attendant upon the salvation of one single soul! Teachers, what a motive to diligence!

**3. Consider to what indefinite lengths your usefulness may extend.** Where *you* design only the improvement of individuals, God, through those individuals, may make you

the instruments of blessing multitudes! Where *you* intend only to produce private worth, God may employ your zeal to form public excellences. You may be the means of nourishing and developing intellectual energies, which shall one day be of the greatest benefit to the civil interests of society. And what is more important, you may be imparting the first rudiments of that knowledge and piety, which in their maturity may be employed by God in the service of the sanctuary. Ministers are already preaching that gospel to others which they themselves first learned in a Sunday School; and missionaries are arresting the savages of the desert with the sweet wonders of that cross—which was first displayed to their own view by the efforts of a faithful teacher. Such instances, in all probability, will occur again, and are fairly within the scope of your ambition. In such a case who can trace the progression of your usefulness, or tell into how wide a stream it shall expand into—as it rolls forward in a course never to be arrested, but by the sound of that trumpet which proclaims that time shall be no more!

**4. Think upon the shortness of the time during which the children can enjoy your care.** In a few, a very few years at most, they will all be gone beyond your instruction. Every Sunday almost, some are leaving the school and retiring, it is to be feared in many cases, beyond the sound of pious admonition, forever! Beyond the age of fifteen or sixteen, few remain to enjoy the privileges of the school; and but few, comparatively, remain so long. Could we even protract the period of childhood, and lengthen the term during which they consider themselves as beneath our care; could we in every instance be convinced that when they leave our schools, they still continue to enjoy the means of pious nurture, even in this case there would be no ground for a relaxation of your diligence—the value of the soul, and the importance of its salvation, would demand your utmost exertion. But this is not the case. In a year or two you must give them up—and to what! To the violence of their own corruptions—to the strength of their own passions—to the pollution of evil company—without a friend to watch over them, or a single guide to direct them. On leaving the school, many of them take leave of the church; and when they cease to hear the voice of the teacher, listen no more to the joyful sound from the lips of the preacher.

What a motive to diligence! Can you be insensible to its force? Can you read this simple statement and not feel every dormant energy stirring within you? Can you not resolve, by the help of God, to renew your efforts? Do you not feel the blush of shame for 'past indifference' diffusing itself this moment over your countenance? By all that is dear and invaluable in the eternal interests of the children; by the shortness of the time during which those interests will be under your care, I implore you to be diligent to the very last effort of your soul.

### **5. Remember how transient is the season during which you can be employed in these labors of love.**

Were you certain of reaching the extreme boundaries of human existence, and had the prospect of extending your exertions far into the season of old age; yes, could you be ensured to live a thousand years, and employ it all for the good of others—even under these circumstances, you could not be too diligent in the business of your office.

**Immortality** is a theme that will support the weightiest arguments, and justify the most impassioned exhortations. I again repeat, nor fear the charge of 'repetition'—the salvation of immortal souls is the ultimate object of your office! And when professing to labor for such an object, indolence would be inexcusable amidst the range of centuries. But you have not centuries at command. "What is your life! it is even as a vapor that appears for a little while, and then vanishes away!" The uncertainty of life is a proverb, which we hear every day repeated; a fact which we see every day proved. You may be soon and suddenly called away from the scene of labor. You leave the school every Sunday without knowing that you shall return to it again. Death pays respect neither to youth, nor usefulness—but mows down together the tender herb, the fragrant flower, and noxious weed. The next stroke of his scythe may reach you! Among the names that will be inserted in the report of the present year's proceedings as blotted from the book of mortal life, **yours** may be read at the next anniversary amidst the sighs and the tears of your fellow teachers! The place which knows you now, may then know you no more forever. You are laboring in the garden of the Lord—but in the garden is a sepulcher. "Work while it is called today, the

night comes when no man can work. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave where you go." Enter upon every Sunday's exertions with the reflection that it *may* be your last—and be as diligent as if you knew that it would!

But death is not the only way in which a termination can be put to your exertions. In a few years the claims and the cares of a rising family may demand your time at home. For however cordially you may be disposed to continue your benevolent attention to the duties of the school and the interests of the children, the demands of the household of your own must be admitted. The honor of doing anything in this way for the cause of God and souls, truth and holiness, may soon be removed beyond your reach. The opportunity will last but a little longer for you to enrich the crown of your rejoicing with fresh gems, or to increase that part of the bliss of heaven, which will arise from witnessing the raptures of those whom we were the instruments of introducing to the mansions of glory. It is a golden season that you now enjoy—it is rapidly passing away—it will never return; diligently improve it therefore, while it lasts!

**6. Dwell upon the honor of being instrumental in imparting moral, spiritual, and eternal benefits.** I have already pointed out, which indeed requires no proof—the adaptation of Sunday School instruction to promote the moral excellence of the lower classes—and whoever does this, must be acknowledged to be the most useful, and therefore the most honorable member of the community. The men who have improved and adorned their country by the splendid creations of their genius, have had their names emblazoned in the temple of fame, and received all the honors which admiring generations could confer upon their memory. But what is the honor of adorning a city with the classic productions of the chisel or the pencil, and filling it with temples, statues, and paintings—compared with the more useful labor of causing righteousness to flow down its streets like a river, erecting the temples of the Holy Spirit, and multiplying even in the abodes of poverty, the living images of the great God? In imparting moral and spiritual good, you are conferring benefits which shall be perpetuated

through infinite ages after the fashion of this world has passed away forever! This is emphatically to do good!

What can equal the honor of being instrumental in reforming, renewing, sanctifying, and adorning the human character; clothing it with the virtues of morality, and investing it with the graces of true godliness! Among the ancient Pagans, it was a title of the highest honor to be termed a 'Benefactor'—to have done good was accounted honorable; hence the apostle argues that for a good man, that is a man who does good, some would even dare to die. "To love the public," says a wicked writer, who yet found himself compelled by the force of reason to publish this confession, "to study the universal good, and to promote the interest of the world as far as it is in our power, is surely the highest goodness, and constitutes that temper which we call divine." In this consists the true honor of your employment, that it is doing good, and to do good is Godlike. God is by no means dependant upon the use of 'means' for the communication of moral and spiritual benefits—he could have accomplished the purposes of his benevolence without the intervention of human instrumentality; this arrangement was designed in the way of favor to humanity, and was expressly intended as a distinguished, though unmerited, honor upon the human race.

Dwell upon your character and circumstances, and say if it is not singular goodness in Jehovah to employ **you** in imparting the knowledge of his nature and of his will, to your fellow creatures. The good you do is not merely of a temporal nature; although even in this sense it is a high honor to do good. It is noble to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to heal the sick, and shelter the aged. The name of the philanthropist shines with a purer, brighter glory on the page of history than any other. If then, it is so honorable to do good to the body, how much greater the distinction to relieve the miseries and establish the interests of the immortal spirit; to render our fellow creatures happy in themselves, and a blessing to others; to fit them for the communion of heaven, after having taught them to be the humble ornaments of society on earth!

To communicate eternal spiritual good—is the very noblest

employment of an intelligent being. It is that very operation in which the great God takes more delight than in all the rest of his works. This was the object on which the heart of the Redeemer was set when he was made flesh and dwelt among us. For this the Holy Spirit was poured out from above. For this prophets labored and apostles preached. In the perfect enjoyment of spiritual benefits will consist the consummation of heaven itself. What a distinguished honor then to be engaged, although in the humblest manner, in *such* a work! This is to be raised into a likeness of that glorious being who is good and does good. A time is fast arriving when it will be seen and felt, that to have been instrumental in conferring spiritual good upon one soul of man, is a brighter and more lasting glory than the most solid achievements of philosophy, or the most splendid discoveries of science!

Let, it be manifest then by your diligence, that you are sensible of your privilege. Put not the glory away from you. Stir up every energy of your soul, to do all the good you can. It is an object worthy of your hallowed ambition. The **warrior** who is pressing through human misery to pluck his blood-stained laurels, thinks little of the hazard of his life. The **author**, by intense study, is wasting away his strength to gain the prize of literary fame. The the **artist** is laboring for the applause of futurity. Be it your object to do good to the present and eternal interests of your fellow creatures, and in such a career, your ambition is pursuing a loftier flight than all the rest, and ascending into regions far elevated above the highest pinnacle of the temple of fame.

**7. Consider what results might be expected—if every teacher were possessed of all suitable qualifications, and were to devote himself to the duties of his office with all possible diligence.** It may be safely affirmed that we have never yet seen, that we have scarcely yet conjectured the hundredth part of the benefit which the Sunday School system **might** be made to produce—when applied under all the advantages of which it is susceptible. Its adaptation and capacities for improving the condition of the poor are admirable and incalculable. Take the aggregate number of Sunday school teachers, and suppose that these teachers, to whom the pious education of millions of poor

children are entrusted—were all fully qualified for their office, and most diligently employed in discharging its duties; suppose they were all people of exemplary piety; possessed of an enlarged acquaintance with the whole range of revealed truth; well instructed in all the general proprieties of human understanding; endowed with peculiar aptitude to impart instruction to the youthful mind, and patient in their temper. With such qualifications suppose they all recognized, as the ultimate end of their labors, the formation of those truly pious habits in the children, which should be connected with the salvation of their immortal souls, and subordinate to this the improvement of their general character, so as to render them kind, gentle, submissive, and orderly. Then conceive of these thousands of teachers, thus fitted for their work, devoting themselves to their weekly business of instruction with intense ardor of mind; entering upon the duties of their office Sunday after Sunday with a deeply interested heart; laboring with the most affectionate and unwearied solicitude for their present and eternal welfare; conducting the whole business of instruction with a judicious discrimination of the different tempers they have to deal with; wisely applying all suitable rewards and punishments; punctual and unwearied in their attention; dignified yet affable in their manner—and mingling with all their efforts importunate prayer to him who alone can render them effectual. In addition to this, suppose them in their behavior one to another to be universally affectionate and respectful, acting in perfect harmony for the general good, and animated by one mind. Suppose, I say, that this were universally the case with the vast body of Sunday School teachers—what results might we not expect!

When we consider the adaptation of the system itself to impart religious instruction, and produce pious impression; when we consider that godly education is among God's own instituted means of conversion; when we consider how willing he is to pour out the influence of his Spirit upon the ordinances which he has appointed—especially when we add to this the good effects which have already resulted from the imperfect application of the system—it is scarcely possible to conjecture what a glorious revolution would be visible in the habits of the lower orders of society, if our teachers were universally such as I have described. Instead of hearing

occasionally that here and there a child was under pious concern—we would in all probability have the pleasing scene before us of great numbers inquiring the way to Zion with their faces thitherward. Instead of occasionally witnessing external reformation of conduct in those who were crude, intractable, and violent—we would often receive the gratitude of parents rendered happy by the moral alteration in their once disobedient and rebellious offspring. The church and the world would both together look to the Sunday School institution as one of the greatest blessings ever bestowed upon man!

But, ah! some will say, this is a 'pleasing vision'—a Utopian picture! Why then is it only a vision? Why is it only Utopian? Only let each teacher resolve by God's grace, to be all that is here described—and all the results may become a glorious reality. Instead of looking at the whole body with a desponding wish that it were indeed entirely what it should be, let each individual look in upon **himself**, determined that nothing shall be lacking on his part to realize this blissful vision. If we would obtain the result which the exertions of all would produce—we must seek it by the contribution of individual diligence.

Amidst the complaints which I have often heard of a lack of success, it has long been my conviction that this lack is to be attributed to the defects of the teachers. Proper **views**, proper **qualifications**, and proper **diligence** in those who have set their hands to the work, would be followed with much greater practical effect than it has ever yet been our felicity to witness. The defect is not in the system—but in those who apply it!

Let me then most earnestly enjoin you to seek a larger measure of suitable qualification, and to display still more diligence in this very important institution, and by a consideration of what would be the result if all teachers discharged *their* duties with wisdom and assiduity—let *your* mind be excited to the greatest exertions.

**8. Anticipate the approving testimony which at the last day the Lord Jesus shall bear to all those who have in any measure promoted his cause.** That day of

righteous retribution; for which all other days were made, is hastening on. Time is drawing to a close; the world is sinking to dissolution; and all mankind converging to "the judgment seat of Christ, where everyone shall receive the things done in the body according to that he has done—whether it be good or bad."

Before that tribunal *you* must render an account of *your* conduct. To that Judge you are accountable both for your personal obedience, and the manner in which you discharge your official duties. Then we shall know the real state of your heart and the true character of your motives. However diligent you may now be in the subordinate duties of your office, yet if not a partaker of real religion, in vain will be the effort to supply personal defects with 'official activity'—or to turn away the wrath of him who sits upon the throne with the useless plea, "Lord! Lord! did we not prophesy in your name?" To be rewarded in that day, as a faithful teacher—we must first be accepted as a real Christian! Without this you must take your place at the left hand of the Judge, with those whom heaven rejects from her bosom, while hell moves to swallow them up!

But should you most happily work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, and then labor to glorify God in the salvation of your lost pupils, not a single effort of your zeal; not a prayer nor a word shall be forgotten in that day of holy retribution! Publicly accepted first in your person, you shall then be as publicly applauded for those services, which your humility may now think almost unworthy of his notice—but which his mercy will not allow him then to overlook. Then when the deeds of heroes shall be passed over in silence, or mentioned with reprobation; when poets, except those who have sung to the harp of piety; and philosophers, except such as have employed their researches to manifest the glory of God—shall sink down without distinction in the general mass into eternal destruction—then shall the holy useful teacher, attended by the children he had been the means of reclaiming, be presented before the face of an assembled universe, arrayed with infinite honor and glory—not the mighty multitude of patriarchs and prophets—apostles and evangelists—reformers and martyrs—ministers and missionaries, pressing to receive

their crowns, shall throw *him* into obscurity, or deprive *him* of his reward. But amidst surrounding millions the faithful teacher shall stand single and apart to receive the public plaudits of his Judge—"In as much as you have done it unto the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me! Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord!"

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