

## Chapter 1

### Learning about Adult Learning

This is a book about techniques that make learning happen. I want to share with you in simple terms some ideas that will help make your Sabbath School class a place of rewarding and productive excitement.

First, what is learning?

This is a very important question. Your concept of learning will mold your approach to teaching. That's why you may find it stimulating now to consider some definitions of learning.

*Change* – that's a most concise definition of learning. One authority says that learning is a "relatively permanent process resulting from practice and reflection—a change in performance."

"Learning occurs when a person responds to a situation to achieve mastery of a problem, satisfaction of curiosity, relief of frustration, knowledge of facts or insights into the meaning of life. Behind the process is some kind of motivation, and out of it comes various degrees of satisfaction."

Change...response...satisfaction—all are part of learning.

The same is true of Christian education. Only the content and the object of change are different. For us, learning is any change that moves us closer to Christ and thus a God-like character. "Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ." Ephesians 4:15 RSV.

### Learning That Lasts

An old adage says, "Education is what you have left when you have forgotten everything you have learned." In other words, remembering facts is not the most important part of education. You may not be able to pass a test on the lesson's facts, but if your attitudes have changed and your behavior has been altered for the better, then you have learned. The highest level of learning, the kind we are seeking in our Sabbath Schools, is a transformation of character.

But facts are important, too, for they serve as the foundation of a higher level of learning. We should master Bible facts ourselves and then strive to present them in a clear, memorable way.

Our challenge as Christian teachers is to bring people to know Bible facts, to understand their meaning, and to grow in the likeness of Jesus. A higher level of learning leads to an understanding of facts and their relationship one to another. In your study I am sure you have had the experience of sudden insight. It's an invigorating happening! When you can help make this happen for your students, they will feel the same way. That feeling is the best reward for their study.

This level of learning leads to growth in Christian attitudes and behavior. As your students experience the unfolding of truth, they will feel a transforming power operating in their minds. This is the God-given power of truth.

What is your challenge as a teacher of this truth?

It is this: "Those who stand before the people as teachers of truth are to grapple with great themes." *Evangelism*, p. 151.

## Getting the “Big Idea”

A theme or concept is the “big idea” that holds the facts together in a cohesive whole. Facts, like bricks in a house, must be arranged into a meaningful whole. That “meaningful whole” is what we mean by “concept.”

Some of the great themes or concepts we form in Sabbath School include:

The nature of God  
The nature of man  
The problem of sin  
Salvation  
Creation  
Heaven

Attitudes will grow out of these concepts and these in turn will affect behavior. That’s why we must learn to present “great themes” as clearly and interestingly as possible. We are not just presenting facts; we are helping lives to be changed.

No Sabbath School teacher should be content with “getting through the lesson” by presenting bare facts. This does not lead to changed attitudes.

For instance, a Bible teacher was enjoying a discussion with a group of teenagers after a Bible class one Sabbath afternoon. They were talking about the meaning of faith. Someone asked, “What is faith?” A girl responded, “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” And then the teacher, satisfied with that answer, went on to the next question.

No learning happened.

Now, if the teacher had followed through: “But can you tell us in your own words, from your own experience, what faith really means?”—then he would have produced some thought. The student would be forced to search his memory, exploring the meaning of the facts he had learned, and then putting all these into some form of concept.

A right kind of question will help the class think through facts and arrive at some concepts. But the teacher can come up with meaningful questions only if he also has thought through the concepts. He cannot lead his class into conceptual thinking if he himself never goes beyond the facts.

As teachers we must try to avoid questions which produce rote answers. If the student has the answer at the tip of his tongue, or if he has used that answer over and over again, then he will learn absolutely nothing from the question.

“Who was John the Baptist?” Rote question.

“The forerunner of Christ” – Rote answer.

“What qualities of character in the life of John the Baptist are especially important for Seventh-day Adventists?” “Why?” this is a concept-producing question.

“How does faith help you to be a victorious Christian? This is a concept-producing question.

Why are questions like these important? Thought questions are important because they lead the learner to think on deeper levels. *And thinking changes lives.*

### **You Are at a Place of Higher Learning**

The Sabbath School is a place of higher learning. Fellowship is part of Sabbath School but Sabbath School is not primarily a fellowship gathering. Some classes may have lively, even humorous discussion at times, but Sabbath School is not a verbal game room.

Sabbath School is a place of thinking, learning and spiritual growth.

Some come for the program, to be inspired, to enjoy Christian fellowship, to sing, and to be entertained. But to be involved in life-changing learning? Why, that's work! And the Sabbath is for rest!

We can understand this type of feeling. All through the week we've been involved in activities that drain the brain and tire the muscles. We've had our nerves irritated, our senses assaulted and our patience tested. So, on Sabbath morning, we would just as soon not get involved. Feed me—but nothing that I have to chew on too much! I want to be filled without having to exert too much energy!

As teachers, we must constantly keep in mind what God's ideal is for the Sabbath School. We should "set every agency at work, that the school may become the noblest, most efficient school in the world." *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 162.

You can see that we are facing a big challenge. This is the reason for this book—to help you teach in such a way as to reach even the unwilling student.

As we study the teaching methods of Jesus, as our teaching skills grow, we will see more and more people becoming eager to dig into the Bible and learn for themselves. We will see the Sabbath School become a time of refreshing for soul and body. Tired students will become imbued with new energy.

Students will begin to see the Sabbath School in the same light as the teacher—a place of higher learning, a place of growing.

### **You Learn by Doing**

You learn to walk by walking, not by reading a book about it...not by listening to lengthy talks about it. But by walking.

Learning is like that. You learn by being involved.

Involvement is a word you will encounter over and over in this book because it is so vital to learning. We want to help you to involve your class in the learning process.

Some teachers feel that talking is the only kind of teaching process, and listening is the best learning process. But you don't learn to be a victorious Christian just by listening. You must also *practice*. Learning is something the learner does, not something that is done to him.

Educator David Stoop puts it well: "The role of the learning leader (teacher) is to stimulate and motivate the student to move through the stages of learning on his own...A good coach pushes his players just enough to keep them motivated...He makes suggestions...The coach will suggest a change in the pitcher's wind-up...But the coach does not go in and pitch for him. This shows us that a good learning leader avoids telling the student what the student can learn for himself..."

"He leads his students to conclusions and applications, but he does not spoil the joy of discovery by spelling out the answers. The principles that the student discovers for himself will become a part of his experience more consistently than the answers given by an authority figure."

The Bible is taught most efficiently when it leads the learner to examine the scriptures for himself and make discoveries on his own. Learning is most efficient when the student interacts with the material and with other learners. The greater the involvement in the learning process the more the student will retain and act on what he has learned. "It is a wise educator who seeks to call out the ability and powers of the student, instead of constantly endeavoring to impart instruction." *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 166.

The teacher is not teaching when *he* solves the problems. “Let the activities of the scholars find scope in solving the problems of Bible truth.” *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 114.

If you inspire your students to learn by doing, then you’ve accomplished the best part of education.

### **Adult Learning**

I enjoy teaching adults because they are rich in experience. They come with such a wide variety of temperaments, skills, abilities and background. Every one is uniquely gifted by God.

Some adults are vocal and aggressive. Others are timid and pensive. The richness of the adult years adds great potential for class discussion. Your challenge is to draw them out. The help you do this is one of the purposes of this book.

Adults constitute our largest single segment in the church. The reason is obvious—a person is an adult longer than any other stage of human development. As Robert Browning said, it is the period of life “for which the rest was made.”

Authorities tell us that adult education has become the largest and fastest growing segment in American education today. About one out of three adults in the United States is involved annually in some type of educational activity. Our Sabbath School is our largest continuing school for adults.

### **Adult Learning is Unique**

Have you ever thought about the unique aspects of adult learning? Adult learning is different in many ways from childhood and youth learning. As you read this section, consider your class members and see if you can identify some problems and find some solutions.

I have met many adults who feel very insecure in a formal class situation. They think, “I am afraid I’ll be asked a question and I won’t know the answer.” Many adults are fearful of revealing their ignorance. We want to feel adequate and in control at all times. We all tend to feel intimidated by situations in which our self-image is threatened. This is why so many adults in our Sabbath School class prefer to be passive spectators and “let the authorities do the talking.”

Another problem is that many adults tend to be resistant to new ideas. Adults come to learning situations with a more definite “mind set” than children. This is not difficult to understand when we stop to consider the constant barrage of ideas and words assaulting our senses. Our minds are constantly bombarded by advertising through radio, television and billboards. We tend to erect walls of defense and to ignore information as a protective device. This could be one reason why the attention of adults is difficult to secure and hold.

As we grow older, change is threatening. We tend to be more protective of our beliefs and ideas and less open to new concepts. This is why the teacher of adults must use great tact in introducing new methods of teaching. Remember, adults change **slowly**.

Some of your class members may have negative feelings because they are accustomed to being authorities in their everyday life and now the situation is reversed. They look upon you as the authority and they must listen to you. This is why the teacher of adults can be more effective if he will assume the role of a “learning enabler” rather than the role of a teacher who knows it all.

How do you feel when you sense resistance to your ideas? As you consider this question, you can see how a knowledge of adult learning can be of help to you. When we understand the learner’s problems, how he thinks and feels, we can meet his needs much easier.

Another distinction in adult learning is that adults tend to be very “problem centered” in their orientation. Children and young people may be content to study “subjects,” looking forward

to some future time when the information will be helpful. But adults live in a rough-and-tumble world. Many come hurting physically and psychologically, looking for comfort and solutions to their problems. They ask, “How is this relevant to my life?” “What does the Bible say that will help me now?” “I can’t wait until next week or next month for answers.”

This is why we must teach for today’s living. We must search for Bible answers to today’s problems. We must show that God is “a very present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1. Adults want practical illustrations and examples from your life and the lives of today’s people. Tell what God has done for you, how He has helped you through problems. Assure them that God is indeed waiting with a solution.

### **Motivating Your Class to Learn**

Our needs motivate us. Hunger gets us moving to the kitchen or to a restaurant. Loneliness gets us moving toward people. A need to know gets us moving toward learning.

Everyone is motivated.

Bill is a business man, a respected church member. When Sabbath comes, he rarely makes it to Sabbath School. He feels too exhausted from a hard week. His basic need for sleep motivates him to sleep in. But he also needs fellowship, belonging and some inspiration. To help meet these needs, he is usually motivated to be in church for the worship service.

Now, Ellen is always in Sabbath School. She enjoys her class and says that she gets such a good feeling when she comes to Sabbath School.

But once the class begins, her mind begins to wander. Her thoughts meander aimlessly to other things. Is she motivated? Yes—to attend but not to learn.

The teacher sees Ellen, her eyes on him and assumes that she is learning. Of course he is wrong. Attendance is not attentiveness. Bible learning will not happen unless the student is motivated to learn the Bible.

What can a teacher do to motivate Bill to attend and Ellen to learn? This is a big challenge and one of the main reasons for this book.

Relating Bible truths to life’s needs is a powerful motivator. If a student feels his needs are being met, he will give his attention. He will study. That’s why God has placed certain needs within us—to urge us to seek Him.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow outlined human needs in this order or priority, beginning with the simplest and working up:

**Physiological**—need of food, water, sleep, exercise, sex, etc.

**Safety**—security, stability, freedom from fear, etc.

**Belonging**—love, marriage, family, friends, etc.

**Self-esteem**—achievement, self-respect, status, respected by others.

**Self-actualization** (achieving your potential)—a need to develop, to achieve self-fulfillment.

**Aesthetic Needs**—an appreciation of beauty and order.

The teacher who learns to recognize these needs in his students and seeks to help meet them will secure attention and motivate learning.

The teacher knows that Dan, a member of his class, has been out of work for six months and that he likely has a special need for security and self-esteem. The teacher shares Bible promises with Dan about God supply our physical needs. The teacher can also share some personal experiences that would help greatly. The teacher may also meet privately with Dan and be able to make helpful contacts.

In a young adult class, the teacher recognizes that Elaine has a problem—she has a very low opinion of herself. As he teacher the lesson, he may find quotations and other ways of assuring his students that each person has great value to Christ. When Elaine expresses a thought, the teacher will take time to acknowledge it as being important to the class. Through these ways the teacher will be helping Elaine recognize that she is important to others and to God.

The teacher who recognizes the needs of his students and helps to fulfill them will always have a learning class.

This was Jesus' method. He was always sensitive to human need—spiritual, physical or psychological. He sympathized with the people, listened to their woes, healed their diseases and fed them. No wonder they listened with such rapt attention. This is hwy His teaching brought such profound changes in their lives.

Jesus is the greatest teacher this world has ever known. It is for this reason that we will pay such close attention to His methods throughout this book.

The teacher is a salesman—truth is his product. But before the presents his product, he must arouse an interest. And then keep it..

Many adults have lost a precious childhood quality—curiosity in almost everything. But the spark is still there. The teacher must seek to fan this spark into flame. When he succeeds, his students will learn at an amazing rate. An appeal to curiosity is a vital factor in motivating learning.

### **Change—Your Teaching Opportunity**

The changing needs of adults present an important teaching opportunity. The only sure thing in life is change. From the moment of birth to death, the human being is undergoing change. Each stage of life presents major changes. The students of human behavior call these “developmental tasks.”

“A developmental task is a task which arises at or about a certain period in the life of the individual, successful achievement or which leads to his happiness and to success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness in the individual, disapproval by society, and difficulty with later tasks.” These “tasks” stem from physical maturation, social pressures, values and ambitions of a developing person. A teacher who is aware of these developmental tasks and sees students struggling through them, can teach so as to strengthen his student during crucial times.

Some of these tasks for young adults, according to Robert Havighurst, are:

- “(1) Completing or continuing education,
- (2) Selecting a mate,
- (3) Learning to live with a marriage partner,
- (4) Starting a family,
- (5) Rearing children,
- (6) Managing a home,
- (7) Getting started in an occupation,
- (8) Taking on civic responsibility, and
- (9) Finding a congenial, social group.”

Frank is a teacher of a class of young adults. Most of his students have small children. Frank knows that one of the major concerns of his class is parenting. So each week he looks for points in the lesson which will help parents. He quotes from and recommends helpful books. He shares his own experiences and the experiences of others.

You can be sure that Frank holds the interest of his learners. If there is no Sabbath School class which recognizes the special needs of young adults, then those students often have to work through crises on their own. This is one reason why church members in the 18 to 30 age group often leave the church.

If our Sabbath School teachers will follow the counsel of the Spirit of Prophecy, many needs would be met and fewer people would leave. “Teachers are needed who are able to deal wisely with the different phases of character.” *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 180.

Middle-aged adults also have developmental tasks. Children leave home and adjustments have to be made. Tensions arise in marriage. Biological changes occur. Often one’s energy decreases. Symptoms of aging arise—bifocals, menopause, gray hair. An awareness of these and other problems of middle age will help the Sabbath School teacher to minister to these adults, hold their attention and motivate Bible study.

Senior adults, 65 and older, also must work through certain tasks. Lack of feeling needed, loss of profitable employment, feelings of uselessness, all endanger a person’s feelings of self-worth.

Work is very important to the self-worth of the average American male. And the feeling of uselessness upon retiring is a very real threat to many men. A large percentage of people over 65 are either singled, widowed or divorced. Social isolation and loneliness are major problems of older adults.

We cannot neglect the special needs of this age group. We should seek to understand them and then help ease them. As Jesus did, we should be aware of human needs. “In all their afflictions He was afflicted.” Isaiah 63:9.

### **Learning is a Lifelong Journey**

A baby takes his first uncertain steps.

A child memorizes a Bible verse.

A student solves a calculus problem

A person kneels to accept Jesus Christ as Savior.

A parent talks with his child.

A mother cries at her daughter’s wedding.

An elderly person accepts the fact that his years are few.

All of these people are learning, for learning is development. It is facing something new. It is change. Jesus described it this way: “First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” Mark 4:28. He was not discussing agriculture; He was describing people and their development.

Education “Is the harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers.” *Education*, p. 13.

“Adapt yourselves no longer to the pattern of this present world, but let your minds be remade and your whole nature thus transformed.” Romans 12:2, NEB.

Learning in a Sabbath School class is a redemptive process. “The work of education and the work of redemption are one...” *Education*, p.30. God wants to redeem the total person—his mind, thoughts, feelings, attitudes and his behavior. If learning occurs in the Sabbath School class, as God intends that it should, there will be changes in knowing, feeling and action.

You and your students will become new persons in Christ.

That is learning!

## Chapter 2

### Planning and Preparing for Learning

Everyone plans, but it's the quality of the planning that counts. Take a building for example. What goes into a plan comes out in the building. So it is with teaching. It is fun to plan a new house, and it's enjoyable to plan for teaching and its product—learning.

I taught an adult Sabbath School class for many years before I made *the discovery*—what goes into a lesson plan determines if learning is the outcome. If learning is to occur, it takes planning and preparation. Careful planning and much prayer, I have discovered, take the stress out of teaching and make it a joy. This is why I am excited about sharing the planning techniques in this chapter. If faithfully used, these methods can make your class come alive!

I must admit, however, that at first some of these techniques seemed awkward and time consuming. But now I wouldn't teach without them.

I want you to get acquainted with a teaching plan. You will find a sample form at the end of this chapter. Please examine it carefully. I have found this form to be one of my most helpful tools. Preparing a teaching plan is one of the most vital parts of your preparation.

The teaching plan is to a teacher what a map is to a traveler or a blueprint is to a builder. I have found that following this form lessens uncertainty and gives confidence and assurance. A teaching plan helps you match the lesson with the proper method. It helps you relate the lesson to the needs of the learner. Planning helps you keep the lesson moving along and it assists the teacher in making systematic use of classroom time.

Some teachers don't plan. They study their lesson diligently, pray and depend on the inspiration of the moment to get them through. I believe that you will agree that this is inadequate.

For many years my lesson plans consisted of a few ideas or illustrations jotted down on the margin of my quarterly. Now I find that plan to be too vague.

A good lesson plan contains a careful, detailed arrangement of things for the learner to do and to discover. An adequate lesson plan contains a detailed statement of the central truth of the lesson, a list of the needs of the learners, the lesson aim and a method of getting attention. It will include way of involving the learner in actual Bible study and suggestions for some method of helping the learner to apply the truth to his life.

Chapters Two through Four will deal with the important elements of the teaching plan. This chapter will be limited to:

- Ways to get your heart in tune
- Practical suggestions for study
- Study resources
- How to keep the lesson on track
- How to identify and write the central truth of the lesson.

### Getting in Tune with God

The most important preparation for the teacher is that of the heart. We must first find God's message for ourselves in the lesson we plan to teach to others. Let the truths of the lesson warm your heart. How can we stand before our classes without first kneeling before God in

earnest and sincere prayer? We are told that “prayer and study should go hand in hand.” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 318. Ellen White asks a pointed question: “Then of what value would be the teaching of one who knew nothing by personal experience of the power of Christ?”—*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 904. “The love of God must be living in the heart of the teacher of truth; his own heart be imbued with that deep and fervent love which Christ possessed; then it will flow out to others.” *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 4, p. 317.

### **How Much Study is Necessary?**

Perhaps you feel as I do—that you never have enough time to study. There are always so many tempting areas unexplored, so many ideas beckoning to further research.

Sometimes on Friday night I have been asked to teach with only an hour or two of preparation possible. It’s wonderful how the Lord blesses in an emergency! But if I wait until Friday evening every week, can I expect a miracle to supply my lack? I think not.

Most Sabbath School teachers need several hours spread out over the week to be adequately prepared. Paul said to Timothy, “Do your best to preset yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15, NIV. If I want God’s approval as a teacher, it means work. I have discovered a close correlation between the quality and the quantity of study and the quality of student learning.

It takes time to get in tune with God and to discover His cues. But as we are teaching, what a thrill it is to sense that God’s Spirit is directing our minds and that we are His instruments in teaching!

### **Developing a Plan of Study**

How should you approach lesson preparation? Everyone, of course, will develop his own plan of study. *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* suggests that “careful study of the next week [begins] on Sabbath afternoon...” p. 43.

I have found that a thorough study of the entire lesson very early in the week helps greatly. There is a very good pedagogical principle for this advice. By studying the entire lesson on Sabbath afternoon, you will get an overview which will provide perspective. It helps to provide continuity too.

As from a mountaintop, you can view the main lines of thought, considering their relationship. In my teaching I try to build bridges between ideas. This seems to help my students to see the parts of the lesson and their relationship to the whole. Ideas seen in relationships are more easily understood and remembered.

As you prepare to teach, ask yourself questions like:

- What does this lesson say about the nature of God?
- How does this theme relate to the plan of salvation and the great controversy between Christ and Satan?
- How can I lift up Jesus, His righteousness, His sacrifice for sin and His coming again?
- How is this lesson related to last week’s lesson and to the topic for the quarter?

I have found it helpful to have a definite place and time for study. Have you every noticed that successful people budget their time? Give God the best time of your day. I find it’s very easy for study time to be pre-empted. If possible, provide a quiet, comfortable place away from distractions with your teaching materials close by.

### **Tools for the Task**

My books are my tools. Tools are very important in any craft—including teaching. Your primary tool is your Bible. But which version? The market is flooded with dozens of different translations.

I believe that every Sabbath School teacher should have three or four modern translations in order to determine more accurately just what the passage is saying. Choose a version or translation which adheres to the more literal meaning of the original text rather than a “dynamic” or interpretive translation. Recent discoveries in archaeology and philology help us in getting at the real meaning of the Scriptures. I like the Revised Standard Version and the *New American Standard Bible*. These are reliable translations. For serious study, I avoid paraphrases like *The Living Bible*.

I appreciate the Teacher’s Edition of the Adult Quarterly. It contains excellent resource material, study helps, many good discussion questions and Bible learning activities.

My concordance is my second most valuable tool (I have a concordance in my Bible but that isn’t enough.) my personal preference for a concordance is *Young’s Analytical Concordance to the Bible*. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* is also excellent. These concordances contain every major word from the King James Versions of the Bible with every phrase in which it is found. It identifies the original Hebrew or Greek words from which the English word is translated. Concordances are easy to use and relatively inexpensive. I wouldn’t be without at least one.

The Gift of Prophecy to this church is our most valuable teaching tool other than the Bible. First, do careful study of the Word. Study the context of the lesson passage, look up important words in a concordance, then go to the Spirit of Prophecy for further insight and help. The Conflict Series, the *Testimonies for the Church*, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, *Ministry of Healing*, and other inspiring books are a gold mine of truth for the Sabbath School teacher. The *Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White* is indispensable.

A good Bible dictionary is an important part of your library. The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* is available at your Adventist Book Center. The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* contains a wealth of interpretive suggestions, comments, and Spirit of Prophecy selections on the entire Bible. If you can’t afford this, you can purchase a good one-volume commentary on the whole Bible such as: Jamison, Faussett and Brown, *A Commentary Critical and Explanatory of the Whole Bible*, or Dummelow’s *Commentary on the Whole Bible*. A good Bible atlas, such as *The Westminster Historical Atlas to the Bible*, is also a very important volume for the Sabbath School Teacher.

### **Keep on the Main Line**

In many ways the teaching-learning process resembles a great railroad system. A railroad has many spurs, side tracks and short lines to surrounding communities, but most of the traffic goes on the main line. Good teaching is like that. There are many fascinating side lines that tempt exploration. But good teaching keeps on the “main line”—the central truth of the lesson. This does not mean that the teacher will not touch on other related matters in order to meet specific needs. The Holy Spirit may direct the teacher to scriptures and thoughts not on the lesson. Be careful never to reject a question or comment even though it might not be pertinent to the lesson. A person may be expressing a felt need. One can digress to meet a need, deal with a question briefly and then get back on the “main line.”

I try to concentrate on the “one big idea” of the lesson. A hodge podge of ideas, however stimulating, will not induce efficient learning. For retention and comprehension, the lesson must be held together by ideas that are related.

### **The Central Truth**

The first thing I do in lesson preparation is to discover the central truth or the “one big idea” in the lesson. Remember, we are to “grapple with great themes.” *Evangelism*, p. 151.

Every blow of the hammer should drive the nail deeper. Every text, illustration, visual aid, learning activity and all discussion should be like hammer blows to drive home the central truth of the lesson. This helps the learner to remember the key point of the lesson.

How do you find out what the central truth is? In identifying the central truth, I take time to reflect on the lesson as a whole. What is its overall emphasis? Is there one central idea that encompasses the entire lesson? What does the title say about the lesson? The process of discovering the central truth (known as synthesis) is very important for me because it is the foundation for my teaching. By keeping the central truth in mind it helps to keep the lesson on the “main line.”

### **Write the Central Truth**

The central truth should be stated briefly and clearly in one sentence. (This is the first blank on the lesson plan sheet at the end of this chapter.) I always write the central truth and then carefully criticize it. I usually must rewrite it several times in order to state it correctly. This helps to “fine tune” my thinking. Fuzzy thinking by the teacher will result in blurred concepts in the mind of the learner.

John Sisemore says that the central truth must be “a complete, comprehensive statement that can be used, evaluated, and written out.” He suggests several ideas for testing the central truth for accuracy:

- (1) Does the statement reflect the heart of the lesson passage?
- (2) Does the statement set forth a basic principle of Bible truth?
- (3) Does the statement present an interest, problem, or need in present life?
- (4) Does the statement seem appropriate for your class?

The above process is not easy, but the more I practice it the easier it becomes. And it has done wonders for all Sabbath School teachers who practice it. It “puts a handle” on their lessons.

### **The Macro-Micro-Macro Principle**

Dr. Jack Dunham in his *Senior Teaching System Course Guide* suggests the following use of the central truth, or key points as he calls it, in actual teaching situations. In order to aid the learner in remembering the key point of the lesson, he suggests that the key point be clearly stated early in the class discussion. This is the overview.

Next, the lesson is broken down into its component parts which comprise the detailed discussion of the lesson. At the end of the lesson the key point is stated again as a summary and application. This is an example of the old adage which says: “Tell ‘em what you’re going to tell ‘em; tell ‘em; then tell ‘em what you told ‘em.”

In teaching a Sabbath School lesson titled “He Draws Us,” I used this principle in the following way. The key point or central truth (Macro) was: “The crucified Christ draws all men to Himself through the Holy Spirit for the purpose of redemption and fellowship.” The subtopics or breakdown (Micro) states how and under what circumstances He draws us:

1. As light He draws us
2. As a Lamb He draws us.
3. He draws us through the Holy Spirit.

4. We can be drawn to Christ only on God's terms.

With the central truth solidly in mind we then discussed the four subtopics. Near the end of the discussion I restated the central truth again as a synthesis.

I have found that coherence and continuity in a lesson presentation greatly aid the learner in remembering the high points and in helping him to apply the lesson to his daily life. As a cut diamond reflects light from many angles so a properly prepared and presented lesson will reveal the beauty of the central truth from many points of view.

### **Good Methods Will Do Wonders**

I have discovered that careful planning pays big dividends. We reap what we sow. He who sows sparingly, who invests little time and effort in planning and preparations, will reap sparingly in class participation and learning.

Becoming a master teacher is no accident. There are no short cuts to excellence in any field, including education. "Let every teacher feel that he must know more; he must be better acquainted...with the best methods of imparting knowledge..." *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 99.

Let us not be satisfied with mediocrity. As we plan each lesson carefully, as we use good methods, we are cooperating with the Author of all learning. We may then as for the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit in all our preparation.

### **Putting Theory into Practice**

GOAL:	To learn how to identify and write the central truth (key point) of the lesson.
PREPARATION:	1. Review this chapter as necessary. 2. Study the Sabbath School lesson thoroughly.
TECHNIQUE:	Identify the central truth and write it on your lesson plan sheet. Test the central truth using the criteria mentioned in this chapter. Read the central truth to your class at the beginning of the session and again at the close of the class.
EVALUATE:	the procedure after class. What went well? What can be changed?

## Teaching Plan

**Lesson No.** \_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Central Truth** of the lesson

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Life Needs** of my members. (A brief list of needs which this lesson may meet.)

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**Lesson Aim:** (A very brief statement of a learning goal toward which the teacher will direct the learning activities and class discussion.)

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**Atmosphere for Learning and Attention Step:** (Use a visual, a story or a learning activity interesting enough to catch immediate attention and lead naturally into Bible study.)

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**Into the Word:** (Use activities that will give your class a problem to solve or make discoveries which will lead into actual Bible study. Probe important verses—emphasize the key point throughout.)

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**Application:** Select an activity, related to the aim, which will help them to discover the implications of the truths for their own lives and lead them to commit themselves to action. (carry-over).

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## **Chapter 3**

### **Forming Aims That Teach**

Have you ever been in a Sabbath school class where the teacher flitted aimlessly like a butterfly from one beautiful truth to another? How did you feel about the class? Such teaching makes me feel dissatisfied. I feel much better when the teaching moves toward a learning goal.

What I want to share with you in this chapter could be called “bee-line teaching.” This is teaching that moves in a straight line toward a specific educational objective. It is a method that is not difficult yet it will transform your teaching effectiveness.

Note the undergirding of this idea in the book *Education*, p. 233, “Before attempting to teach a subject he [the teacher] should have a distinct plan in mind, and should know just what he desires to accomplish.” The aim is the most important and influential factor in the teaching learning process. It could be likened to the axles on which the wheel of learning turns.

#### **What is a Teaching Aim?**

A teaching aim is a statement of what you hope to accomplish during the class ours. It describes what the student is to be like after he has experienced the teaching sessions. If asked to state an aim for a lesson, many Sabbath School teachers would say, “My aim is to make better Christian.” Or, “To teach my people to love God and to prepare for Christ’s coming.” This sounds good but such objectives do not help the teacher or the learner. Goals should be stated in precise language; worthwhile goals are specific, action oriented. The following aim is too general: “I want my students to be more unselfish.” This could better be expressed: “I want my class to act more unselfishly in their relationships in the home this coming week.”

#### **Advantages of Stating Teaching Aims**

I have found that stating my teaching aim in writing guides me in my study in the choice of my materials, and in the selection of my teaching method. Stating the aim keeps my lesson “on the track” and avoids wasting my time on irrelevant issues.

Some may feel that a specific learning aim for a given lesson may inhibit them from meeting obvious needs which arise as the class proceeds. A teaching aim does not preclude flexibility, modification or reorganization during the class period. In fact, when I have a clear-cut teaching aim in mind, I have found it much easier to adapt my lesson to meet a specific need.

The more definite the teaching aim is in your mind, the better will be your selection of material and methods to reach your aim. A clear, precise aim in your mind will direct the entire teaching-learning process. When the learner senses that there is direction in the lesson, his interest will greatly improve.

#### **Kinds of Aims**

Teaching aims can be classified in three general areas: knowledge, attitude, and conduct response—in short: to know, to feel and to respond. Please note on the lesson plan form, “As a result of this lesson I want my students to:

Know \_\_\_\_\_  
Feel \_\_\_\_\_  
Respond \_\_\_\_\_

*The Knowledge Level:* Knowing Bible information is a basic to learning. Facts are the building blocks of all learning. As the student comes to understand the facts, he organizes them into concepts.

The fact that God loves and provides for him, that He cares for others, that He loves his family, that God is all powerful, all-wise, that God is a Spirit—these facts about God can be organized into a concept of God by a learner. The next step in generalization: God can be trusted. Next, the learner discovers how these facts relate to his life.

*The Feeling Level:* Knowing, understanding and conceptualizing facts molds our feelings. When a person accepts certain facts about God—that He gave His only begotten Son for our salvation, that He hears and answers prayers—he is moved and inspired to action. This is learning on the affective or feeling level. Attitudes and feelings (toward people and situations) change by hearing and accepting the Word of God.

*The Conduct-Response Level:* The third level of learning is the behavioral or conduct response. Most of the aims used earlier as examples have been conduct-response aims.

Some lessons lend themselves to one level more than others. However, the teacher should select one dominant aim, either “knowing,” “feeling,” or “responding.” After you study a particular lesson you may select a knowledge aim. Another lesson may seem to favor a feeling aim. Still another may seem to indicate a conduct-response aim. Remember, the aim should be: “Brief enough to be remembered, clear enough to be written down, specific enough to be attainable.”

A typical knowledge aim would be: “As a result of this lesson, I want my class to know and understand the Bible teaching concerning the fall of men.” A knowledge aim deals with the learning of factual material and interpreting its meaning.

A typical feeling aim might be: “As a result of this class period, I want my class to appreciate more the loving care of God for His children.”

The conduct-response aim might be: “As a result of this lesson, I want my class to depend more on God’s care in helping meet this week’s temptations.” This is perhaps the most important level of learning: every lesson should move us to some kind of response.

Learning means change. A halfhearted, unconcerned approach with no definite clear-cut teaching aim will not move people to action.

Teaching with an aim does not mean manipulation of the learner. Rather, it means that the teacher purposely leads the student to the discovery of truth which leads to change in his life.

## **Learners Have Needs**

The Teacher’s Edition of the Adult Sabbath School quarterly provides a suggested theme for each lesson but no aim. The author of the lessons cannot suggest an adequate aim for your class since he does not know your students. We are teaching people, not lessons.

We repeat again the admonition of the servant of the Lord, “The teacher should carefully study the disposition and character of his pupils, that he may adapt his teaching to their peculiar needs.” *Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 231. “In all true teaching the personal element is essential.” *Education*, p. 231. We emphasize this again because it is the key to effective learning.

The Bible accurately describes human needs in general but the teacher needs to know the specific needs of his class members. People do express their needs but usually not openly.

How can the busy Sabbath School teacher get acquainted with the needs of his learners? You as their teacher must listen with both ears and eyes. Watch for non-verbal clues. Many fine books are now available in the area of adult education and psychology. Christian writers have explored this field also. Visit your Adventist Book Center or local Christian bookstore for source material. (See the Bibliography for specific books in this area.)

In becoming more sensitive to people's needs, I have found certain methods helpful. As I reflect on my own needs and the needs of others close to me, I gain valuable insights. One tool I have found invaluable is a loose-leaf notebook with a page for each person in my class. Include such information as full name, correct address (and a map if necessary), telephone number, age and birthday. Also jot down notes like, "John seems uncomfortable in the area of offerings," or, "He seems insecure," or, "He likes golf," or, "He is a jogger."

As you observe people—their words, facial expressions, and actions—your will become more sensitive in discovering and identifying human needs. True, it takes effort to get acquainted with class members. I have found that visiting my members in their homes is most productive in knowing and meeting needs. This helps me to build ideas into my lesson to meet specific needs. As I do this, I find interest and attendance grow dramatically.

A word of caution at this point. We all tend to be self-protective about *our* weaknesses. In seeking to meet the needs of others the Sabbath School teacher must exercise great tact and sensitivity. Jesus gave us a beautiful example of tactfulness in his dealing with Simon of Bethany. The Savior might have denounced this Pharisee and exposed his hypocrisy, but He did not. "Simon was touched by the kindness of Jesus in not openly rebuking him before the guests...He saw that Jesus did not wish to expose his guilt to others, but sought by a true statement of the case to convince his mind, and by pitying tenderness to subdue his heart...his pride was humbled, he repented, and the proud Pharisee became a lowly, self-sacrificing disciple." *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 567, 568. The love of Jesus in the teacher's heart will motivate him to follow the example of the Master Teacher.

## Write Your Aim

You have mastered the facts of the lesson; you have written the central truth, you have jotted down some important needs. You are now ready to write your teaching aim.

Most of us think of writing as a chore. But writing helps one to think through an idea. Sir Francis Bacon said, "Writing maketh an exact man." Writing your aim will help you to clear away fuzzy thinking.

Findley B. Edge says that an aim should be:

"...brief enough to be remembered  
...clear enough to be written down  
...specific enough to be obtainable."

Aims should be written from the teacher's point of view. It is the teacher's statement of the learning outcome. This will govern his selection of learning activities, visual aids, Bible and Spirit of Prophecy passages. Use action phrases like: "To help my members face the problem of...to lead my learners to discover...to motivate my members to explore...to apply and to appreciate..." These kinds of statements declare specifically what the teacher hopes to see happen.

Let's look at some examples. Let's say your lesson theme is honesty in business relations. You state your aim. As a result of this lesson "I want my students to be truly honest in all ways." This is a conduct-response aim. The aim is short enough to be remembered and clear enough to be written down. But is it specific enough? The teacher should ask, "*How* do I want my students to practice honesty?" a better aim might be: "I want my class to be strictly honest in figuring their income tax next month."

I remember well when I first started writing teaching aims. Often I would fill up a page writing and rewriting. It took time but I stuck with it. With practice it became easier. And I have found that it really pays because it has done so much for my teaching.

### **A Conduct-Response Aim Helps the Learner Apply Truth**

We all have difficulty knowing when and how to apply Bible truths to specific life situations. But I have found that when I use a conduct-response aim, with an appropriate Bible learning activity, my learners are better able to apply generalized concepts to specific life situations. Findley B. Edge in his book, *Teaching for Results*, suggests that character grows out of the development of both generalized concepts and specific responses. He says "The individual first accepts a generalized idea of honesty, kindness, or unselfishness as the way life ought to be lived. However, while the individual *accepts* the idea as a whole, the idea does not automatically operate in all the specific relations of life."

I remember a student in college who would never think of copying answers from my examination paper. Yet, he continually asked to borrow my notebook, which was to be graded, and copied my work in order to catch up. I have seen a child be very kind to a stray cat but very cruel to a little brother. It is easy to hold to a generalized idea but difficult to practice the idea in specific relationship. This is why it is so important for you to use teaching aims which encourage specific actions.

Too much teaching in Sabbath School is "inspirational" or "moralistic" in general terms, but learners fail to carry the ideas into specific life situations. In your class discussion try to help the learners see how to transfer generalized truths into specific actions. The best way for you to do this is to have a clear-cut, accurately stated conduct-response aim.

Let us look at some examples. Your aim might read: "To lead my class to be more thoughtful at home next week." This would be greatly improved by stating specifically how this thoughtfulness is to be expressed as: "To show thoughtfulness to companions, by remembering detailed instructions and doing my share of the chores willingly."

Suppose your lesson theme is on controlling appetite based on 1 Corinthians 9:25-27. The aim could be: "To help my members reinforce their resistance to self-indulgence by recognizing its dangers and using the spiritual resources available in today's lesson."

We have said that education is designed to change people—for the better. The teacher should therefore determine the kinds of changes he wishes to bring about, and arrange his teaching plan accordingly. Then, at the conclusion of the lesson period, he should find out if his procedures were successful.

Note the following counsel: "A mere intellectual understanding of the Word of God will not be sufficient to influence the habits of the life, for the life is regulated by the condition of the heart... (teachers) should not cease their labor until they have evidence that the precepts of heaven are not only accepted by the understanding of the pupil, but written upon the heart." *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 37.

Your earnest prayer for guidance in stating aims is so very important. Ask God to reveal to you the needs of your members and to impress upon your mind special truths in the lesson in order to meet specific needs.

### **Use Your Aim to Evaluate**

“Did my teaching hit the target? Has anything happened? Has there been a change in the learners? Do they know more, or feel differently, has there been a change in their behavior or lifestyle?”

In order to answer these important questions, you must have some method of evaluation. But how can you evaluate if you had no aim or objective in mind in the first place?

A specific teaching aim will provide you with a standard or norm by which to measure your direction and progress. For instance, if your topic was “The Millennium,” as knowledge aim might be stated: “As a result of this lesson, I want my class to know the main features of the Bible teaching on the millennium.” To evaluate you could give a simple quiz at the close of the lesson. Or, you could ask your members to draw a diagram of the millennium.

You can also evaluate by observation. A potluck where you meet your class members on a social basis will provide opportunity for observation and evaluation. By asking specific questions in class, you may be able to detect changes in attitudes and feelings.

Let’s say your aim states: “To help my class to view the race issue as Jesus did.” This is a feeling or attitudinal aim. A class social occasion might give you an opportunity to evaluate any shift in attitude or feeling by listening and observing.

The use of a teaching aim does not guarantee successful teaching. But failure to use an aim makes success more difficult. I refer again to the important statement quoted earlier. “Before attempting to teach a subject, he (the teacher) should have a distinct plan in mind and should know just what he desires to accomplish.” *Education*, pp. 233, 234.

### **Putting Theory into Practice**

- GOAL:** To learn how to identify and write the teaching aim.
- PREPARATION:**
1. Review this chapter as necessary.
  2. Study the Sabbath School lesson thoroughly.
  3. Using your teaching plan sheet do the following:
    - a. Identify and write the central truth of the lesson.
    - b. List the needs of the learners.
- TECHNIQUE:** Consider to which of the three levels of learning your lesson would best lend itself:
- Knowing (factual information)
  - Feeling (attitudinal)
  - Responding (behavioral)
- Based on the needs of your learners and the nature of the lesson, write your teaching aim: “As a result of this lesson, I want my learners to: (Select one)
- Know:
  - Feel:
  - Respond:
- Follow the criteria on page 16. Write your aim on your teaching plan sheet.
- EVALUATE:** the procedure following your lesson period.

## Teaching Plan

**Lesson No.** \_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Central Truth** of the lesson

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Life Needs** of my members. (A brief list of needs which this lesson may meet.)

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson Aim:** (A very brief statement of a learning goal toward which the teacher will direct the learning activities and class discussion.)

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Atmosphere for Learning and Attention Step:** (Use a visual, a story or a learning activity interesting enough to catch immediate attention and lead naturally into Bible study.)

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**Into the Word:** (Use activities that will give your class a problem to solve or make discoveries which will lead into actual Bible study. Probe important verses—emphasize the key point throughout.)

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**Application:** Select an activity, related to the aim, which will help them to discover the implications of the truths for their own lives and lead them to commit themselves to action. (carry-over).

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## **Chapter 4**

### **Changing Learners Through the Power of Caring**

Recent research has pointed out some interesting facts about learning. A child who is insecure, fearful and hostile usually has great difficulty in learning no matter how capable the teacher or adequate his methods. It has been demonstrated that when the teacher first works on the relationship and the child feels that “here is one person who really cares about me, here is one person I can really trust,” his mind seems to unlock and he begins to learn. You may drill a child in the multiplication table and he may seem unable to learn—until genuine love enters the picture. Then the miracle happens—the child’s mind is released and learning may go forward at an amazing rate.

I have discovered that the same principle holds true with adult learning. When we come to Sabbath School we bring our fears, insecurities and hostilities with us. We may feel isolated from other people even though we may be sitting close to another person.

I have learned that it really pay to give attention to the atmosphere for learning. When I honestly try to get acquainted with my class members, when I take time to show love and concern for each person, I see some amazing things happen. Prejudice and apathy disappear, hostilities evaporate and there is a readiness to learning.

This is the secret I want to share with you in this chapter, perhaps the most important chapter in this book. If you will put this principle to practice, it will make a profound change in your teaching and in the learning process. Lawrence Richards describes a condition often seen in Sunday School classes, “How tragic the sterility of classes where strangers sit together each week in well-dressed rows, masking the hurts and clutching close the private joys while a ‘teacher’ whom few know intimately mouths the words of truth.” Do you think this description could ever resemble a Sabbath School class you’ve been in? I believe we must face up to a problem existing in many Sabbath School classes—too formal a context for learning.

### **The Family School**

Moses, in his final address to Israel, gave us the optimal teaching-learning situation: “And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your children and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.” Deuteronomy 6:6, 7, RSV. Moses described a family setting where transfer of information, values and ideals flow naturally from older members of the family to younger ones, and where younger members are likewise heard and valued.

The family is an ideal learning situation. Father and son talk as they work together; mother and daughter may communicate as they wash and dry the dishes or mend the clothing. Values and ideals are best transmitted and communicated in a family setting. In this context people can be genuine, they accept one another and trust I learned.

How different from many Sabbath School classes where the Bible is taught in abstract terms, the setting is formal, and where teaching and learning are isolated from the realities of daily life. Paul, the great New Testament teacher, sets forth a superior context for learning. He

points to God as a Father and suggests that all of us are a part of His family. Paul prays that the Spirit will work in us “so that Christ may dwell in your heart through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3:17-19, NIV.

It is in the warm, caring environment of family love, where parents and children support each other, that people learn and grow best. I am sure you want, and are striving for, this kind of caring, supporting love in your Sabbath School class.

I used to feel that since I was teaching the Bible all I had to do was to make the facts known. But I have since learned that if I am going to follow God’s method of teaching I will seek to develop “family” classes where there is a caring attitude toward one another. Lawrence Richards points this out so well. He says that freedom to talk about what’s really happening in one’s life can come only in an atmosphere of love. Only under that kind of love can your students examine their lives in the light of God’s Word.

Formality in a teaching situation hinders the Holy Spirit from speaking to your students’ hearts. “it is not only that the Word brings life into focus, life brings the Word into focus.” Note this reference to “family schools” in the *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 6, p. 152. “They should be family schools where every student will receive special help from his teachers, as members of the family should receive help in the home. Tenderness, sympathy, unity and love are to be cherished.” While this reference does not refer specifically to Sabbath School, it is certainly appropriate.

## Jesus’ Family School

My research into the teaching methods of Jesus has been most rewarding. It has greatly influenced my ways of teaching. I am amazed that so little attention is given to the teaching techniques of Jesus, even by Christian educators. Certainly, as the greatest Teacher this world has ever know, He should be our example in teaching techniques. I have discovered that Jesus’ methods really work and I am sure you are making this discovery too.

Jesus did not organize formal schools where His disciples and followers attended classes. Rather, He used the family model. He spoke of His disciples as “my mother and brethren.” They lived together, ate together, traveled together and learned together. There were vast differences among the disciples in culture, temperament and background. Matthew the tax collector and Simon the zealot were poles apart ideologically. Sometimes they disagreed violently. They argued vigorously. But Jesus’ love glued them together. In this “family” setting, they learned to love and trust each other. Eventually, after three years with the Master Teacher, “...each was ready to concede to the other the highest place.” *The Desire of Ages*, p. 646.

Jesus never hurried to lecture or preach. He took time to bless children and their mothers. He dined with the tax collector and paused to heal a blind man.

How many of us look at our watches, thinking of all the good material yet to cover. We jump into the lesson as if content were everything with little thought of the needs and feelings of our learners.

Jesus had many “family schools.” In His travels He often stayed with families. When Jesus came to visit I’m sure that his host often invited his friends and neighbors in to hear Him. As any real teacher does, I am sure Jesus taught at every opportunity.

One advantage of a small group is the possibility of getting close to the individuals and meeting their needs. Jesus loved to stay at the home of Lazarus, Mary and Martha. Here was a “Sabbath School class” that was anxious to learn.

Mary Magdalene was of special concern to Jesus. How carefully, tactfully and lovingly the Great Teacher dealt with this needy person. “Mary had been looked upon as a great sinner, but Christ knew the circumstances that had shaped her life.” *The Desire of Ages*, p. 568. What does this say about Jesus as a teacher? It tells me that Jesus cared enough to get acquainted with His learners and to know them personally—their needs, their weaknesses and their desires. Even though Mary’s case appeared hopeless, Jesus did not give up. “Seven times she had heard His rebuke of the demons that controlled her heart and mind. She had heard His strong cries to the Father in her behalf...and in His strength she had overcome.” *The Desire of Ages*, p. 568. Mary became an ardent disciple and a powerful witness for the gospel.

This example from the Master Teacher has had a profound influence upon my life and teaching. I believe that the most important aspect of teaching is loving relationships. I am convinced that it is the comparative isolation in most of our Sabbath School classes that accounts for the large number of “Sabbath School drop-outs.”

I know it takes effort to create “family schools,” and visit in the homes of our learners and get acquainted with them. But I have found that it really pays. Note the words from *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 76. “You will come close to them in loving sympathy, visiting them at their homes, learning their true condition by conversing with them concerning their experience in the things of God, and you will bear them in the arms of your faith to the throne of the Father.” “You must win their affection if you would impress religious truths upon their hearts.” *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 68.

Modern educators have discovered that loving relationships are most important in bringing about behavioral change. Carl Rogers, a modern educator, makes a point that teachers must create the conditions for learning. He emphasizes that experiences and feelings are the most important ingredient in learning. Rogers’ belief is that “traditional learning is so impersonal, cold and aloof that it really goes in one ear and out the other.” According to him, we learn only what is really important and relevant to us as people. Then Rogers goes on to point out that we cannot go through the motions and just pretend we like people or listen to their feelings half-heartedly; we really must mean it for the process to work. Notice Ellen White’s statement in this regard. “Love, the basis of creation and redemption, is the basis of true education.” *Education*, p. 16.

### **Creating Family Sabbath School Classes**

How do you go about creating a “family class”? In addition to visiting in the homes of your members, it is very important to be friendly and warm in your relationships in the class. If possible greet each member personally. If you cannot greet them all during the class period, you can meet them either before or after Sabbath School. Give special attention to the timid and socially backward ones. Go out of your way to greet them and visit with them after Sabbath School or church.

If you as the teacher will place yourself on the level of the students and become a learner with them, this will help you to build a family class. In other words, the teacher thinks of himself as a learning leader rather than an authority figure.

Note this statement which describes the proper and improper attitude of the teacher. “They [teachers] are too high up on the ladder to reach down a helping hand, warm with

tenderness and love and deep earnest interest. Let them step down and by their *manner* say to the students: 'I will no longer stand so far above you. Let us climb together and we will see what can be gained by a *united study of the Scriptures...Let us study together...*by asking questions you may suggest ideas that are new to me. Various ways of expressing the truths we are studying will bring light into our class...Do not hesitate to state your view of the subject. *Light will shine upon us as in the meekness and lowliness of Christ we study together*.'" *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 436. (Italics supplied).

The teacher who is warm and accepting in his attitude will go a long way toward creating a family-like atmosphere in his class. The teacher must be willing to be human, even to be vulnerable. The teacher who can share his journeys as a Christian, both joys and disappointments, is sharing his humanity, showing that he values his learners. I have found that trust begets trust. When I can say, "My problem is ...," learners tend to remove their masks and become more genuine and open toward one another.

The six-point plan outlined on the front of your class directory booklet is designed not just for statistical reasons; rather, it is a series of suggestions on how to show concern for persons. "Who is here? Who is absent? Who are our guests?" It helps to introduce visitors and shows that Sabbath Schools care about people.

1. WELCOME and INTRODUCE visitors.
2. MAKE A BRIEF MISSIONS APPEAL, calling attention to the class goal. Place your own offering in the envelope, then pass the envelope to the members of the class. Ask someone to count the offering.
3. MARK THE ATTENDANCE RECORD YOURSELF, ASSIGN MEMBERS TO VISIT all regular and prospective members who are absent. Every absent member should be visited by someone each week.
4. ENCOURAGE DAILY LESSON PLAN STUDY. Ask "How many are following the daily lesson study plan?" Mark the number reporting in the space indicated.
5. REPORT TO THE CLASS the amount of the offering today. Compare with the offering goal.
6. TAKE LAY ACTIVITIES REPORT. Each member marks his own report card. NO PROMOTION is to be done at this time (Not over 2 minutes).

I have found that a few minutes spent in this kind of caring ministry each week helps to create a climate for learning and helps to make a "family class." Comments like the following help also: "George, is your wife home from the hospital yet?" "We are glad to see the Marshens back from vacation. How was your trip?" "Has anyone heard from the Gregorys?" This is the second Sabbath they have been absent. Who will volunteer to call them?" "We are passing a get-well card around for Sue. Please, everyone sign it."

Families include parents...and parents care about children. If a child is missing, a parent cannot rest until he's found.

One morning and I was visiting evangelistic interests, I came to a home where there were twelve children in the family, from a young toddler to an older teen-age daughter.

"Which one do you love the most?" I asked the mother.

She looked over her family lovingly, then paused for a long moment. She said, "Well, I guess it's the one who is either sick, lost, or in trouble."

I will never forget the love I saw in the face of that mother. Each child was distinct and precious to her. Do you think she was concerned when one was missing? It is this kind of caring that makes a "family class" with an atmosphere that nourishes the heart and frees the mind to

learn. In such a class there are no strangers, no masks, no walls of isolation. The learners can be genuine and open with each other because there is trust. And trust allows for sharing feelings on deeper levels. Such a class will always have lively discussion because everyone feels free to share.

## **Earning the Right to Teach**

A teacher earns the right to teach when he secures the undivided attention of his students. W. Richard Leshner, in writing to Sabbath School teachers, says: "Do not assume that class members are waiting with bated breath for the first words of truth to fall upon their ears. Plan an interesting introduction. Better still, make the introduction striking, startling, or shocking. Every sound unrelated to the lesson is competition for the class members' attention. Your first words must be more attractive than a conversation with a friend, a bird song just outside the window, or the wow-wowing siren of a passing police car. An interesting beginning will capture the ears of most class members." *Worker, Journal of Sabbath School Action*, October, 1976.

You as the teacher are anxious to share. But your learners have not had your experience. In fact, their minds are often occupied with problems: "What shall we have for salad?" "How shall we occupy our teen-agers this afternoon?" "I'm so tired, I can't wait to get home."

Your first job is to lure their minds. You must bait the hook and catch their attention. "Yesterday I was driving on the freeway and suddenly from nowhere a red light was flashing immediately behind me..."

You can begin with a short story followed by "What would you have done, George...Sue...Tom?" Or, it could be a learning activity. "Everyone turn to his neighbor and in 60 seconds come up with a list of things which tend to make you angry." Or, you could draw a figure or illustration on a chalkboard or flip chart.

Spend time planning a good introduction. For 167 out of the 168 hours of the week, the minds of your class members have been occupied mostly on other things. As a teacher you must assume that every mind is preoccupied.

Jesus was a master of getting attention. His favorite method was a brief well-told story. His stories were usually related to the needs of His learners.

Everyone will pay attention if it promises to fill a need. The best approach is one that centers on life. We tune into ideas based on our need. Jesus usually began where His learners were. His method of securing attention often began out of the situation. He often answered a question occupying the attention of the people. The story of the good Samaritan capitalized on a current topic of conversation. Sensitivity to what people were interested in controlled what He taught.

Jesus often did or said the unexpected or the unusual. He used "surprise power" by asking for a drink, and thus secured the attention of the woman of Samaria. "How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?" John 4:9. Jesus earned the right to teach by first securing attention.

The teacher's attention device must relate to the lesson and lead directly into the central truth. It should be like a porch on a house, inviting but architecturally fitting with the rest of the house.

The stimulating beginning has just one purpose—to provide a readiness for the study of the lesson. The introduction should "mobilize the energies of the students" and direct them immediately into the lesson. The amount of time will depend on the circumstances. But usually

## Teaching Techniques for the Adult Sabbath School

Author: Charles Betz

an introduction should not take over two or three minutes. The transition to the lesson should be as smooth and natural as possible.

Avoid any ideas extraneous to the lesson. Your plan for securing attention and your plan for transition from the introduction into the body of the lesson should be written into the lesson plan.

## **Putting Theory into Practice**

- GOAL:** To learn how to:
1. Create an atmosphere of fellowship and trust.
  2. Secure the attention of the learners by planning a good introduction.
- PREPARATION:**
1. Review this chapter as necessary.
  2. Study the Sabbath School lesson thoroughly.
  3. Using your teaching plan sheet do the following:
    - a. Identify and write the key point.
    - b. List the needs of the learners.
    - c. Write your teaching aim.
- TECHNIQUE:**
1. Try at least one thing suggested in this chapter to increase trust and openness in your class. Obviously, an atmosphere of trust and fellowship cannot be created by any single technique.
  2. Plan an attention-getting device as part of your introduction. Be sure it is brief, interesting and germane to the lesson. Be sure it conforms to the criteria as set forth in this chapter.
  3. Write your plans for increased fellowship, attention and Introduction on your lesson plan sheet.
- EVALUATE:** the procedure following your lesson period.

## Teaching Plan

**Lesson No.** \_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Central Truth** of the lesson

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**Life Needs** of my members. (A brief list of needs which this lesson may meet.)

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**Lesson Aim:** (A very brief statement of a learning goal toward which the teacher will direct the learning activities and class discussion.)

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**Atmosphere for Learning and Attention Step:** (Use a visual, a story or a learning activity interesting enough to catch immediate attention and lead naturally into Bible study.)

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**Into the Word:** (Use activities that will give your class a problem to solve or make discoveries which will lead into actual Bible study. Probe important verses—emphasize the key point throughout.)

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**Application:** Select an activity, related to the aim, which will help them to discover the implications of the truths for their own lives and lead them to commit themselves to action. (carry-over).

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## Chapter 5 Into the Word

The wharf was jammed with fishing boats and they all looked alike to me. I was looking for *Lucky Lady*. According to my interest card, Becky lived on board and was “interested in the Bible.” After endless searching of names on hulls, I spotted the boat—paint peeling, rusty, with nets scattered on the cramped little deck.

I climbed aboard and knocked on the side of the cabin. A door opened and a straggle-haired, hollowed-eyed young woman peered at me. “What do you want?” she inquired. I explained I was a minister. She let me in. The cabin didn’t look very promising. Dirty dishes and clothes were scattered over the galley. There was a mixture of diaper and fish smells. Two preschool children were playing on the floor in the cramped quarters.

She softened when I mentioned our Saturday morning Bible class and the subject of heaven. “Yes,” she said, “I’ve always been interested in the Bible, but I’ve never owned one.” I talked to her for some time. Then, before leaving, I said, “I’ll be looking for you next Saturday morning.”

Next Sabbath Becky walked into the foyer of the church with her two little ones in tow. All three were poorly dressed, timid and uneasy. But our greeters made her feel welcome. They took the children to their divisions, and Becky was ushered into my class and handed a Bible. I observed the way she reverently held it. I could see her interest deepen as she joined in our Scripture search on the subject of heaven. During the class she asked a couple of questions and seemed satisfied with the Bible answers that she found. She returned Sabbath after Sabbath.

Becky was so open to truth, so eager to learn the Bible. Her attitude reminded me of Paul’s words to the Bereans: “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Acts 17:11. Becky was like that, too; she carefully studied every doctrine we hold. And then the miracle began to happen. Gradually there was a wonderful change that took place in her attitude, appearance and life style. She was baptized and became a loyal church member.

### The Berean Model

The Bereans provide a model for the kind of scripture search which should be a part of every Sabbath School class session.

*Into the Word—that’s where it is.* If we do not succeed in leading class members into the Word, there will be no significant change. *And if there is no change, there is no learning.*

The power to transform lives is in the Word of the living God. We may entertain, we may impress, we may even inspire—but what the people need is the living Word. Only this can feed, strengthen and change people. “There should be a living, growing interest in storing the mind with Bible truth. The precious knowledge thus gained will build a barrier about the soul.”

*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 36. “All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instruction for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed.”

1 Timothy 3:16, 17, *Good News Bible*.

In His Word, God discloses Himself as eternal, infinite and holy. God wants to be known by man; He longs to bridge the gap between Himself and man. The Bible is God's self-revelation. "In the Bible, both old and new sections, men meet God at work, yearning and acting for their salvation. The purpose of teaching this material will be to expose learners to the possibility of divine-human dialogue in their own experience."

### Leading Into the Word

The Berean "search" provides the clue as to the method. The Greek word *anakrino*, translated "searched" in the King James Version, "...means to sift up and down, make careful and exact research as in a legal process."

Elen White says: "Among the pupils of the Sabbath School there should be a spirit of *investigation...*" *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 27, (Italics ours).

The question we are seeking to answer in this chapter is: "How can we create a teaching-learning situation in an Adult Sabbath School class where teacher and students are actually searching the Scriptures, turning the pages of the Bible, investigating truth? One thing is certain: there can never be a genuine spirit of investigation in a class when the Sabbath School teacher spends most of the period telling about *his investigation*. The teacher who tells the class all about his discoveries, who reads his favorite quotations and asks a few rhetorical questions will ever have a "Berean class."

The teacher must resist the tendency to tell or explain, or comment extensively, if he wants a "spirit of investigation." After all, who wants to investigate if the teacher explains everything? Remember the admonition: "Let the activities of the scholars find scope in solving the problems of Bible truth." *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 114.

Make the class period a genuine study experience—explore, compare, contrast, discover! Plan things that the learner will *do* rather than things you will say. Help the students to share the responsibility for learning. Constant use of the lecture method kills initiative, curiosity and creativity. As John Sisemore says: "Perhaps the greatest count against the constant use of the lecture is that it inhibits and destroys the will to participate. It turns a hungry mind into a flabby storage bin." Dr. Sisemore further says that the more a teacher does for the learner, the less the learner does for himself.

The teacher should spend his time organizing for "Scripture search." "The Sabbath School should be a place where the jewels of truth are searched for and rescued from their environment of error, and placed in their true setting in the framework of the gospel." *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 12.

Remember, the Bereans did the searching, not just their teacher. The *class* searches for and finds the jewels of truth. Jean Piaget, the great Swiss child psychologist, said that if you tell a child something, he will soon forget it. But if you allow him to discover it, he will remember it the rest of his life. The same principle holds true for adults.

This will involve a change of teaching philosophy on the part of most Sabbath School teachers. This will not be easy for a teacher who has taught another way for many years. But we should remember that without change there can be no progress. The first step in moving from a basically *telling* stance to a *Berean* kind of class is in planning. To do this, you plan things for the learners to *do*. The following suggestions provide some ideas on how this may be done.

## **Eight Ways to Lead Your Class into the Word**

### **1. Scripture search:**

Pose a problem. The problem should be answered by Bible texts found in your Sabbath School lesson. The problem should be related to the age level and the needs of your class. It could be doctrinal or a life situation. Make it interesting and relevant. It can be either real or imaginary. The following is an example. This could be used as a class activity or it could be used as a take-home assignment and become the basis for part of your class discussion.

LESSON TOPIC: Confession

PROBLEM: Recently I told a lie to protect my boss from an abusive customer. I have confessed this to God. But should I confess also to the customer and to my boss?

SCRIPTURE SEARCH: Make suggestions below based on Scriptures and Spirit of Prophecy quotations on page 22 of your quarterly.

(Allow five minutes for the exercise if you use this in class.)

### **2. Bible Paraphrase:**

Provide sheets of paper with a key passage from the Sabbath School lesson written at the top. Note the sample below:

LESSON TOPIC: We consecrate ourselves

Read the following verse over several times. Think through its meaning. Then write it in your own words. 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20. KJV. "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

PARAPHRASE:

(Allow at least five minutes for this learning activity.)

What is the learning value of this exercise? Obviously, in order to paraphrase this verse, one must understand its meaning. If the learner writes the passage in his own words and then reads and explains it to the person next to him, he will better understand a key text in the lesson. He will remember it; the changes are good that it will have some permanent value in his life. After the students have finished the learning activity, you might read the passage from several modern speech translations and compare. *Remember, it is better to plumb the meaning of a single passage in depth than to read many passages superficially.*

### 3. Critical Thinking, Classifying or Comparing

The purpose of this activity is to lead the students to learn how to classify, compare and to analyze Scripture. On a chalk board or flip chart, you make two heading. Note the example below:

LESSON TOPIC: The Laodicean Message	
SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:	
Identify Christ's Problems	Identify Laodicea's Problems
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
SOLUTIONS:	

Using their Bibles, the class identifies these problems. Have a class member write them on the chalkboard or flip chart. Remember, the problems come from the class as they analyze the Scripture passage; they do not come from the teacher. The teacher guides and gives clues, but he does not answer the questions.

Allow ample time for thought. After you have considered Christ's problems and Laodicea's problems, ask for solutions from the passage. The teacher could also have one or two choice selections from the Spirit of Prophecy setting forth solutions to Laodicea's problem. Put them on cards and ask members of the class to read them. Key points in the solution could also be written on the chalkboard or flip chart. This approach to teaching puts the burden for searching the Scriptures, analyzing and classifying directly on the learner. Everyone is involved, so don't be in a hurry. Allow time for thought. Remember, learning also occurs during silent periods. Develop a "tolerance for silence."

### 4. Research and Report:

The teacher presents a research problem relating to next week's lesson. The assignment could involve the entire class, teams or individuals. The teacher focuses on the problem and

guides the researcher in planning the extent, resources and specific amount of time for their report. The teacher should be available for guidance during the week.

Be careful not to discourage the participants in giving to difficult an assignment. Then be sure to call on the person or team for a report and allow the amount of time agreed upon. Don't assume that your pupils will not respond to such a challenge. Give this a fair trial. You will be surprised at the response. This plan gets people into the Word. See the sample below:

LESSON TOPIC: Confession

RESEARCH PROJECT: Please research the difference between David's confession of his sin and Saul's confession after he saved the spoils of battle contrary to God's direction. Class report time: 5 minutes.

Characteristics of David's confession—See 2 Samuel 12:7-13; Psalm 51:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Characteristics of Saul's confession—see 1 Samuel 15:9-31; Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 631, 632:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3

What can we learn from these experiences:

### 5. Case Study:

In this activity the teacher prepares a written statement or gives a brief lecture of a real life situation, problem or Bible incident. This is distributed to the class and analyzed during a portion of class time. The learners look for scriptural solutions. If the class members have trouble in thinking of Bible texts, the teacher should be prepared to provide the texts.

The *learners* must pinpoint the answers. At the end of a ten-minute period of research and writing the class members share their solutions in groups of two or three. The life situation or problem should deal with a specific situation arising out of the Sabbath School lesson. The Bible verses in the solution should come from the lesson. In selecting the problem the teacher should consider the persons involved, their background and relationships. Then he should guide the group in evaluating the situation.

After the reports the teacher will summarize the major findings and lead the group in determining a likely course of action. Help the class in (1) listening carefully and analyzing the case, (2) identifying the major issues, (3) looking for behavior that may have contribute to the problem, and (4) seeking for Biblical, psychological and social principles in solving the problem. Example:

LESSON TOPIC: We Are Sorry

Peter and Judas—A CASE STUDY

Characteristics both men had in common:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Important differences between Peter and Judas:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Read the following Bible texts and Spirit of Prophecy volumes:

Luke 22:24, Matthew 16:22; Matthew 17:1-4; Matthew 26:35,69,70,75;  
Matthew 8:19, 20; John 12:4-7; John 13:10, 11, 27-30; Desire of Ages pp.  
712-715, 716-722.

Lessons we can learn about repentance from the experience of these two cases:

A case study could also be a current news item. This could be given as a brief story followed with a list of Scriptures. The situation should be directly related to the Sabbath School lesson. The teacher presents the case, provides the data, and allows time for Scripture search and reports.

#### **6. Resolving Conflict:**

Pose conflicting opinions regarding an issue based on your Sabbath School lesson. Guide the class in a search of the Scriptures to resolve the problem. Note the following example:

LESSON TOPIC: We Trust Him

KEY TEXT: John 4:48

Help us resolve this conflict: Some people believe that God wants us to believe in Him regardless of external evidences. Others contend that God always provides external evidence before he asks us to believe. To resolve this problem consult the following scriptures from the lesson: Hebrews 11:6; John 4:48-50; John 4:23-30; John 20:30,31; Steps to Christ, pp. 105.

MY CONCLUSION:

### 7. Support an Opinion or Belief:

This is a valuable technique for getting your class into the Word. The teacher leads the class into purposeful Bible study to support a position or belief. The opinion or belief should be an integral part of the Sabbath School lesson. After the teacher has stated the opinion, the class is asked to give Scripture references supporting or denying the belief. After the group has exhausted its information, the teacher should be prepared to provide extra scriptures for input. Let the *class* pinpoint the Bible answers. Note the illustration below:

LESSON TOPIC: We Are Righteous by Faith

Support and explain the following statement of belief by passages of Scripture from today's lesson:

“Our right standing with God comes only as we look in faith to our crucified and risen Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Write and explain your texts below:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

### 8. Reconcile Different Points of View

A Sabbath School lesson may present two opposing points of view on a subject. As a method of involving class members in a Scripture search, present the opposing views in a brief lecture and ask the class to research the question and to be ready to report their findings. Note the example below:

LESSON TOPIC: Christian Perfection

KEY TEXT: Matthew 5:48

POINTS OF VIEW:

- (1) Some believe perfection is a relative term referring to Christian maturity and that we can be perfect in our sphere as we are growing into His likeness.
- (2) Others claim that perfection is the same as victory. They do not allow for possible mistakes in the growing process. Victory must be gained over every sin before perfection is realized.
- (3) Still others hold that all that is necessary for perfection is Christ's imputed righteousness.

After reading the lesson passages and Spirit of Prophecy comments, what is your opinion? Please write a paragraph below and support your points by Bible text.

Allow 15 minutes for the writing exercise. This could also be used as a home assignment.

### **What Can I Plan for Them to Do?**

Remember, our goal is to get the class members turning the pages of the Bible—searching the Scriptures. What does the Bible Teach? This is *the* important question! Our job is to teach people to go to the Bible for answers to personal, family and corporate problems.

Now it should be clear what we mean by planning things for the learner to do. One's philosophy of teaching has much to do with the kind of preparation he will make. "What can I plan for them to do?"—this is the question the teacher should solve. As true educators, we must learn how to lead our classes into the deep truths of the Word. We need to "plow deeper", we need to learn to search the Scriptures. How necessary it is that the mine of truth be explored! "As a miner digs for the golden treasures in the earth, so earnestly, persistently, must we seek for the treasure of God's Word." *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 461.

### **Putting Theory into Practice**

- GOAL:** To learn how to lead my class into a corporate study of the Word by actively searching the scriptures.
- PREPARATION:**
1. Review this chapter as necessary.
  2. Study the Sabbath School lesson thoroughly.
  3. Using your teaching plan sheet do the following:
    - a. Identify and write the central truth.
    - b. List the needs of the learners.
    - c. Write your teaching aim.
    - d. Plan an attention-getting device as part of your introduction and something to increase trust and fellowship.
- TECHNIQUE:** Select one of the eight suggestions for leading your class into the Word as suggested in this chapter, and incorporate this into your lesson plan.
- EVALUATE:** the technique at the close of your lesson period.

## Teaching Plan

**Lesson No.** \_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Central Truth** of the lesson

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Life Needs** of my members. (A brief list of needs which this lesson may meet.)

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Lesson Aim:** (A very brief statement of a learning goal toward which the teacher will direct the learning activities and class discussion.)

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**Atmosphere for Learning and Attention Step:** (Use a visual, a story or a learning activity interesting enough to catch immediate attention and lead naturally into Bible study.)

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**Into the Word:** (Use activities that will give your class a problem to solve or make discoveries which will lead into actual Bible study. Probe important verses—emphasize the key point throughout.)

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**Application:** Select an activity, related to the aim, which will help them to discover the implications of the truths for their own lives and lead them to commit themselves to action. (carry-over).

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