

A Core Level Adult Sabbath School Teacher Training Course

This Enrichment Training Course was prepared for the Adult Ministries Department
of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America

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A North American Division Adult Ministries Sponsored Core Level Adult Sabbath School Teacher Training Course

The Adult Ministries Department of the North American Division has developed a curriculum for the enrichment of Adult Sabbath School teacher/discussion leaders and congregation members who are involved in Personal Ministries outreach and leadership. The courses are self-contained units and are not required to be studied in sequence. If you wish to obtain the "Qualified Master" status, you are encouraged to complete the previous courses in the curriculum outline. The curriculum is available at www.nadadultministries.org.

North American Division Sabbath School Teacher's Qualification Process and Curriculum

Core Units

CU 101 – The High Calling of the Sabbath School Teacher
CU 102 – Understanding Your Bible
CU 103 – How to Interpret the Bible and the Writings of Ellen G. White

Essential Skills

ES 01 – Laws of Teaching and Learning
ES 02 – Lesson Preparation
ES 03 – Learning Process/ Learning Styles

**Qualified Adult
Sabbath School
Teacher**

Advanced Skills

AS 1- Small Group Dynamics
AS 2 -Teaching Techniques of Jesus
Additional courses as needed or requested

**Qualified Master
Adult Sabbath
School Teacher**

The High Calling of the Sabbath School Teacher

A North American Division Adult Ministries Sponsored
Core Level Adult Sabbath School Teacher Training Course

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Course Description

Sabbath School teaching means more than simply being named to a position. Teaching or leading an Adult Sabbath School class is a ministry, not just an activity. It is important that the Sabbath School teacher/discussion leader be serious about his or her role, and willing to work toward the ideal. Spiritual impact and personality are key factors in the success of a Sabbath School teacher/discussion leader. These courses will outline the basic spiritual and personality traits expected, the teaching and learning methodology used by Jesus, especially His ways of dealing with people, and will provide support in leading a successful Sabbath School class.

How to Study this Course

This course is both theoretical and practical. It is composed of a course outline, assignment sheets, and attached readings from different sources that cover valuable insights about Sabbath School teacher/discussion leader enrichment.

You can download the material if you prefer to study from a printed copy. You can also study it directly on the screen if that is your preference. When you finish this course you will receive a "Certificate of Completion" indicating that you have satisfactorily finished this course.

Vocabulary

Teacher/discussion leader. In North American Division churches it is customary to use two terms for the position traditionally known as a Sabbath School teacher: (1) "Teacher" and, (2) "Discussion Leader." The reason for the dual terms is that the title of "teacher" is too often taken to be a synonym for "lecturer." A Sabbath School teacher is supposed to be a facilitator who motivates class members to participate in the study and discussion of the lesson. The use of the two titles should be used as a motivating factor to help both teacher and class members understand the ideal role of this Sabbath School

leadership team member. Both titles often appear in this course as “teacher/discussion leader.”

Teacher enhancement training materials and reading assignments almost always use the term “teacher,” so please remember that in terms of how the position is supposed to function, “teacher” and “discussion leader” mean the same thing.

Church/district. Many churches in the North American Division belong to an extended family known as a district. This occurs when the local conference can only finance one pastor for various churches. Because this type of arrangement is common, and often the churches in a district cooperate in sponsoring training programs, etc. the term “church/district” is used in this course.

Textbook

Your textbook is Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*. It is a course requirement to read this book and report on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have read it. Some of the class assignments will be taken from this textbook. If you are unable to procure a print copy, you may access or download a free PDF here, [Counsels On Sabbath School Work](#).

Student Fulfillment Card

At the end of this Study Guide you will find a Student Fulfillment Card. This is the record you will forward to the Adult Ministries Department of the North American Division) to receive your “Certificate of Completion” via the website www.nadadultministries.org.

Types of Study Locations

- If you are studying this class on your own, this online Study Guide will indicate the exercises that you should complete. These contain question-and-answer sheets you can print out to complete. They identify the important points of the readings and units of study. It is very important to fill in these sheets. They are your way of knowing how you are doing in the class.

- If you are studying in a classroom-type setting, an instructor will lead you through various participatory activities.

- If you are studying in a small group, ideas are included for those studying in this environment.

- There are no examinations scheduled for this class, unless an individual instructor decides to use them.

Course Introduction

The mission of the Adult Sabbath School teacher/discussion leader is founded on three cornerstones: being, knowing, and doing.

- “Being” means that an adult Sabbath School teacher must have a valid and perceptible Christian experience, and be prepared to serve as a spiritual guide for her or his class.

- “Knowing” means that a Sabbath School teacher must know what the Bible says and have a significant understanding of biblical history, doctrines, and teachings, and know how to study and interpret the Scriptures.

- “Doing” means that a Sabbath School teacher must have a knowledge of teaching methodology and be willing to invest the time and energy necessary to adequately prepare and lead a Sabbath School class.

This class on *The High Calling and Spirit of the Sabbath School Teacher* is a “being” class. It deals with the spiritual aspects and responsibilities of Sabbath School teaching. It

looks at how these aspects apply to the teacher as an individual and how they affect the members of the class individually and collectively.

Sabbath School teaching means more than simply being named to a position. Teaching an adult Sabbath School class is a ministry, not just an activity. It is important that the Sabbath School teacher be serious about his or her role, and willing to work toward the ideal. Spirit and personality are key factors in the success of a Sabbath School teacher. Attitude and state of mind are transmitted to the students in some inexplicable, mysterious way. The teacher's words and tone of voice reflect attitudes and feelings that either make students uncomfortable, or open their minds to the reception and practice of biblical principles.

If a member accepts a teaching position because of the "call of duty," (often because no one else will accept), it is doubtful that much will happen in either the minds or souls of class members. As laudable as a person's dedication to duty may be, it does not spontaneously translate into effective Bible teaching. It is doubtful that a teacher-less class sitting in church inattentively enjoying the tranquility of the sanctuary environment will learn much when a reluctant, however sincere, person takes over as teacher—other than to most likely be given a lecture about the topic of the day, or worse yet, a misguided discourse about their supposedly low quality demonstrations of "true" Christian behavior.

The Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White always present a higher level to work toward. It is important for a Sabbath School teacher to reach for that ideal. This class on *The High Calling and Spirit of the Sabbath School Teacher* considers and studies the "being" aspect of that ideal and how to achieve it.

W. T. Bartlett well declares, "A call to service as a Sabbath School teacher is a call to Christlike ministry. No teacher should rest content until he or she knows that such a commission has come direct from the great Teacher Himself, that He is controlling His human instrument, and that the human teacher, visible and audible to the class, is a chosen vessel through whom the divine Teacher can carry on His own work."¹

Imparting valid biblical and spiritual information is an important aspect of Sabbath School teaching, but it is not the end of the road. Beyond the mental barriers, sometimes twisted personalities sitting in the class, and the frustration over lack of study and comprehension by the class members, reside the souls and spiritual tone of those same class members. This is where real Sabbath School teaching begins.

Course Objectives

- The teacher will acquire a knowledge and understanding of his or her spiritual impact within the context of Sabbath School teaching, including what the Bible says about wisdom, sphere of influence, personal spiritual growth, and attitude.
- The teacher or prospective teacher will identify and comprehend the degree to which the Lord has endowed her or him with the spiritual gifts of teaching and shepherding.
- The teacher will create a personal statement of mission and a description of how he or she will apply that statement of mission to adult Sabbath School teaching.

¹W. T. Bartlett, *Sabbath School Ideals* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 194), p. 94.

Unit 1

The High Calling and Spirit of the Sabbath School Teacher

Though the prophet Daniel didn't have Sabbath School teaching in mind, he made a point of value: "The teachers and those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament," (Dan. 12: 3, Amplified Bible).

Ellen White counsels: "The teacher in the Sabbath school should pray daily for the enlightenment of heaven, that they may be able to open to the minds of the [students] the treasures of the Sacred Word."²

Stanley S. Will³ writes, "How can God bestow a greater honor on you than to place His Book in your hands and call you teacher? It is a high calling. In response you yearn to be the best teacher you can be. Ask God to help you to do your best. 'Teach me how to do better work. Give me energy and cheerfulness. Help me to bring into my service the loving ministry of the Saviour.' (*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 474)."

There are many ideas and theories about the best methods to use in teaching Sabbath School. Prior to adequate teaching methods, however, there is a deeper element, expressed by the word "being." Sabbath School teaching is more than what happens on Sabbath morning in the class. It is a ministry. The Sabbath School teacher/discussion leader is a missionary in the sense that she or he is not just a lecturer or even primarily a discussion leader. Ellen White envisioned a corps of teacher/discussion leaders who made Sabbath School their lifelong ministry: "The Lord calls for young men and women to gird themselves for lifelong, earnest labor in the Sabbath school work."⁴ In the same paragraph she adds an element of "being"; "see that you make no crooked paths for your feet, lest the lame be turned out of the path of rectitude by your misdoings."⁵ This is a statement worth some serious thought!

What is involved in this state of "being"? Stanley S. Will cites a two-fold objective: "The work of the School teacher may have a twofold objective. Most of his class may already be converted church members, then the purpose of his teaching will be to deepen their spirituality and to develop in them the Christian graces. Secondly, he will encourage his members to bring the unconverted to the Sabbath School class. Now the purpose of his teaching will be to reach their hearts with the Christ they need so much to know. Jesus Christ and Him only must be lifted up in every missionary endeavor."⁶

²*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 155.

³Stanley S. Will, *Teach* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1974). p. 37.

⁴*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 13.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Stanley S. Will, *ibid.*, p. 22.

Assignment 1

SUMMARIZING SOME CONCEPTS

Instructions: Read *Section Four* in your textbook *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* and fill in Assignment Sheet 1.

➤ *Be sure to record on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have read this article.*

In your own words, write a brief summary of what Ellen White says about each of the following. Though she often makes reference to children and youth, the principles apply equally to an adult Sabbath school class.

Essential qualifications

- Well-balanced, symmetrical characters
- Dress and deportment
- Representative of true religion
- Reverent yet cheerful
- Influence
- Patience
- Self-improvement
- Simplicity and sympathy
- The countenance an index of character

Study Reading 1 and fill in and grade Assignment 2

Reading 1

The Teacher's Personality

- *Be sure to record on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have read this article.*

Chapter 19 in William T. Bartlett, *Sabbath School Ideals* (Nashville, TN.: Southern Publishing Association, 1940).

Note: The author has in mind the children's departments of Sabbath School, but the principles cited apply equally to the adult Sabbath school class.

Teaching can be a very uninteresting and mechanical task, and then it is drudgery for the teacher and a tedious infliction for the taught. The object of the proceeding is to transfer to the mind of the pupils some set of ideas that is in the thought of the teacher. Unless the idea has interest for both, the process is a dreary one. If the teacher's personality is aroused over the idea because of his own intense interest in it, there is a vitalizing contact with the inert mind of the learner, the interest imparts itself, and the whole being of the pupil is stirred.

"The mind (and with it the character) is only nourished by that which strikes home. Either to teach or to train we must awaken the activity of the pupil's mind. Our enthusiasm is good; but his is better. The arousal of our own interest is directly helpful. The arousal of the pupil's is essential. As the late Professor H. R. Withers used to phrase it, 'we must begin at the boy's end'" — "Unfolding of Personality," H. Thiselton Mark, M.A., B.Sc., p. 94.

A teacher who lacks personality can accomplish little. Whatever he knows is but dry learning, with little power to awake the dormant intellect of the pupil. This is true in secular education, and it is even more true in religious instruction, which is calculated, when rightly imparted, to stir a human heart and mind to its depths. The point is well illustrated by the difference between the proceedings of Gehazi and Elisha in their dealing with the dead son of the Shunamite woman. While the prophet accompanied the sorrowing mother, Gehazi was sent on ahead, with the command: "Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand; . . . lay my staff upon the face of the child And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but there was neither voice, nor attention [margin]." The servant returned to his master and reported, "The child is not awaked."

Gehazi's touch is a type of the work of the ineffectual teacher. He has carried out his bare instructions, and that is all. He has laid a dead staff on the face of a dead child, but the child pays no attention. Gehazi is content to return and report that he has done what he was bidden to do, but there is no result.

How differently Elisha goes to work: "Behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes."

Elisha's whole being is enlisted in the effort. His mouth, eyes, and hands make tender contact with the mouth, eyes, and hands of the child. With the glow of his own vitality he imparts warmth to the child. With the patience of sympathy and love he perseveres in his task until his devotion is rewarded with signs of returning animation. At last he is able to give back alive to the rejoicing mother the son that she had lost.

May not the Sabbath school teacher learn a lesson from this interesting story? It is not enough, like Gehazi, to lay a lifeless lesson on a young, irresponsive mind. The teacher must help the child to see what a child may see because his own eyes are at the service of the child's intellect; his hand is holding the young hand not merely in friendly clasp, but in sympathetic apprehension of life's realities as they manifest themselves to the little pioneer; his mouth is uttering kindly, understanding words to a young heart, and helping it to repeat after him words of prayer and praise, words of courage, and vibrant words of life. The young nature is quickened and energized by contact with a wiser and stronger life that is wholly responsive to its instinctive call; and surrounds it with a comforting assurance of warm and helpful affection that will never leave it to contend alone with the fear and the darkness and the power of evil.

Elisha brings an ardent personality to his task; Gehazi, a formal, perfunctory and artificial service. Elisha would have made an ideal Sabbath school teacher. Gehazi would carry out his round of duties with soulless monotony. It seems almost fitting that his end should be, as the record tells us, a living death.

How can an ordinary human being become a glowing personality? Every person might have a distinct individuality, if only the natural endowment were fully developed by wise parents and teachers. But too often the God-implanted instincts are starved by unsympathetic parents, mental powers are dwarfed by indifferent teachers, the body is enervated by malnutrition, so that the personality is enfeebled and stereotyped at a low social standard. It is the work of a good teacher to draw out the potential personality of the child, and the best teacher is one who himself possesses a well-developed, arousing, and inspiring personality.

Such a personality comes as the result of a great ideal, cherished and served in entire loyalty to its appeal. A Sabbath school teacher who has seen the vision of a soul won for a mighty Saviour, a human life transformed into a holy temple for God's indwelling, and who dedicates physical, mental, and spiritual energies to the service of such an ideal, will, no matter how mediocre and commonplace he may seem to others at first, become in time a winsome and powerful influence. The truth he reverently and faithfully holds will transform him; the task itself will train him; and he will steadily grow in mental and moral power. The more the high task transcends his own feeble resources, the more it will call forth faith, and thus enrich him with supernatural gifts. Whoever accepts the weighty responsibility of teaching others the living truths of God's word may confidently pray that he himself shall become in person the clearest illustration of his doctrine, that in him also the word shall become flesh.

The personality of Jesus was the greatest aid to His teaching. When the feeble mentality of the disciples stumbled over His words, He could refer them for clearer light to His personality. "Follow Me," was the invariable charge for His disciples. In the hour of mystery, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." "Abide in Me," is the secret of fruitful service and victory over a hostile world. Jesus sanctified Himself that His followers might also be sanctified through the truth. He invested Himself in His evangel. The Sabbath school teacher must teach a message that has already done a mighty work in his own heart, and the words he speaks to his class must seem to them but the true echo of his own true life. Gracious words, when he utters them, must commend themselves as exceeding great and precious because they shine with the brightness of his own rich and luminous personality.

A call to service as a Sabbath school teacher is a call to Christlike ministry. No teacher should rest content until he or she knows that such a commission has come direct from the great Teacher Himself, that He is controlling His human instrument, and that the human teacher, visible and audible to the class, is a chosen vessel through whom the divine Teacher can carry on His own work. It will be such a teacher's great reward to see the young captivated with the revelation of the glory of the Saviour, carried out of themselves,

liberated from all sinful bondage, exalted, enthused, empowered by the vision of the personality of One who welcomes them into His own marvelous light.

Out of such classwork there come new recruits for the kingdom, not uncertain, hesitating, lukewarm members who soon get weary of the trials of the way, but eager, strenuous workers for the cause. These converts have seen Christ in their teacher, and instinctively they strive after the ideal that has been steadily set before them. They have fallen in love with a type of Christianity that is unselfish, industrious, persevering intellectual, enterprising, courageous, confident, and acquainted with the power of prayer. Better teachers mean better Sabbath schools, better churches, a larger work in the world, and an earlier triumph for the Lord we love.

When the church becomes a mighty army, against which the powers of darkness are not able to stand, the Sabbath school workers will have had much to do in achieving this result. When rewards are distributed, the loyal Sabbath school teacher will not be forgotten. On the Sabbath school teacher rests a great responsibility. We should not call it a heavy responsibility, because the Lord strengthens His faithful workers, and their love for Him makes burdens light. Still the task is great and important. If the church is strong and victorious in its campaigns, it is partly due to the Sabbath school teachers. If the apostasy total saddens our hearts, we feel that a large part of the remedy is in the hands of the teachers.

Assignment 2

What Have You Learned?

Based on your study of Reading 1, answer the following questions. Fill in this assignment before you look at the answer sheet that follows.

- *Be sure to record on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have done this assignment.*

My score ____/20

1. According to the author, what makes the difference between an uninteresting class and a dynamic learning experience? [4 points]
2. In your own words, summarize the thoughts of H. T. Mark. [2 points]
3. Bartlett draws an illustration from the experiences of Elisha and Gehazi. Fill in the columns below at least three lessons he draws and the applications he makes to Sabbath school teaching. [6 points]

Elisha		Gehazi	
Lesson	Application	Lesson	Application

4. What is the author's answer to the question "How can an ordinary human being become a glowing personality?" [5 points]
5. What "vision" motivates a Sabbath school teacher? [3 points]
6. What have you learned from reading this article?

What Have You Learned?

Answer Sheet

My score ____/20

1. According to the author, what makes the difference between an uninteresting class and a dynamic learning experience? [4 points]

Sample answer. *Unless the idea has interest for both, the process is a dreary one. If the teacher's personality is aroused over the idea because of his own intense interest in it, there is a vitalizing contact with the inert mind of the learner, the interest imparts itself, and the whole being of the pupil is stirred.*

2. In your own words, summarize the thoughts of H. T. Mark. [2 points]
Any answer you wrote out is OK

3. Bartlett draws illustrations from the experiences of Elisha and Gehazi. Fill in the columns below with three illustrations and the applications he makes to Sabbath school teaching. [6 points]

Elisha		Gehazi	
Illustration	Application	Illustration	Application
Elisha's whole being is enlisted in the effort.	The teacher must help the child to see what a child may see because his own eyes are at the service of the child's intellect; his hand is holding the young hand not merely in friendly clasp, but in sympathetic apprehension of life's realities as they manifest themselves to the little pioneer; his mouth is uttering kindly, understanding words to a young heart, and helping it to repeat after him words of prayer and praise, words of courage, and	Gehazi's touch is a type of the work of the ineffectual teacher.	It is not enough to lay a lifeless lesson on a young, irresponsible mind.

	vibrant words of life.		
With the glow of his own vitality he imparts warmth to the child.	The young nature is quickened and energized by contact with a wiser and stronger life that is wholly responsive to its instinctive call.	He has carried out his bare instructions, and that is all.	Gehazi is content to return and report that he has done what he was bidden to do, but there is no result
With the patience of sympathy and love he perseveres in his task. Elisha brings an ardent personality to his task.	Elisha would have made an ideal Sabbath school teacher.	Gehazi, a formal, perfunctory and artificial service.	Gehazi would carry out his round of duties with soulless monotony

4. What is the author's answer to the question "How can an ordinary human being become a glowing personality?" [5 points]

Sample answer. *It is the work of a good teacher to draw out the potential personality of the child, and the best teacher is one who himself possesses a well-developed, arousing, and inspiring personality.*

5. What "vision" motivates a Sabbath school teacher? [3 points]

Sample answer. *A Sabbath school teacher who has seen the vision of a soul won for a mighty Saviour, a human life transformed into a holy temple for God's indwelling, and who dedicates physical, mental, and spiritual energies to the service of such an ideal, will, no matter how mediocre and commonplace he may seem to others at first, become in time a winsome and powerful influence.*

6. What have you learned from reading this article?

This is your personal testimony

Unit 1 – Continued

Mary Hunter Moore presents “ten commandments” for a Sabbath School teacher/discussion leader:⁷

1. To be an example: “It is an advantage to any would-be teacher/discussion leader to have a keen, sharp intellect; but the power of the Christian educator is in his [or her] genuine heart connection with the Light and Life of the world” (p. 14).
2. To love souls: “The one and sufficient object of Sabbath School teaching is the winning of souls, and the development of souls into Christian perfection” (p. 27).
3. To pray: “‘Prayer is the better half of study,’ someone has said. Prayer is the atmosphere of study, I might add” (p. 38).
4. To know the Bible: “The teacher/discussion leader must know the Bible; knowing the Bible makes the teacher/discussion leader wise. Mental culture is essential to the teacher/discussion leader, and nothing surpasses the Bible to provide this culture” (p. 58).
5. To love the class: “The love that comes near to individuals and brings them to God is not an aloof ideal but a warm, sincere, genuine personal interest” (p. 88).
6. To give spiritual food: “By ‘spiritual food’ is not meant merely religious sentiment—or sentimentality—but the elements that give power to live a truly religious life” (p. 113).
7. To know methods of teaching: “It is the duty of the Sabbath School teacher/discussion leader to become as familiar as possible with all methods of teaching—both good and bad—to know what to cultivate and what to shun and to have a variety of treatments for different types of student personality” (p. 135).
8. To live with the class: “Thirty to thirty-five minutes once a week is the time usually thought of as occupied with Sabbath School teaching; but in reality such teaching is a twenty-four-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week occupation” (p. 159).
9. To teach the lesson: “To teach the lesson, then, means not only to have a wealth of understanding of the Bible; it means more than knowing methods of presenting that information effectively” (p. 178).
10. To co-operate: “[It is] the duty of the Sabbath School teacher/discussion leader to cooperate in all the details of the management of the organization” (p. 188).

Flora Plummer, who served as Sabbath School director of the General Conference longer than anyone in history, lists thirteen elements she considers as showing the “spirit” of a Sabbath School teacher/discussion leader. These are the characteristics of “spirit” that are the fundamentals of “being” and contribute to the success of a Sabbath School teacher/discussion leader.⁸

1. The spirit of compatibility: “Compatibility, the fine art of getting along with others, is a prime necessity for successful teaching” (p. 7).
2. The spirit of love: “We who would win souls have ourselves been won by the Saviour’s love” (p. 19).
3. The spirit of faithfulness: “The cry throughout the Sabbath School world is for faithful teacher/discussion leaders—teacher/discussion leaders who have a vision of the true objective of the Sabbath School” (p. 27).
4. The spirit of courage: “‘Hope and courage are essential to perfect service for God. . . . Despondency is sinful and unreasonable’” (p. 38).⁹

⁷Mary Hunter Moore, *They That Be Teachers* (Nashville, Tenn.: Southern Publishing Association, 1937).

⁸Flora Plummer, *The Spirit of the Teacher* (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1967).

⁹Quoted from *Prophets and Kings*, p. 164.

5. The spirit of patience: "A Christian cultivates the grace of patience. A teacher must possess it in a superlative degree" (p. 51).

6. The spirit of enthusiasm: "What is more pitiable than a teacher without enthusiasm! To lack it is inexcusable. One may not be able to acquire all the knowledge desired; one may be hindered in the study of methods; but to lack enthusiasm is to surrender to a handicap from which self-rescue is easily possible" (p. 59).

7. The spirit of sympathy: "A teacher who has not a well-developed capacity for manifesting a sympathetic spirit toward others will fail in many efforts that otherwise would have been crowned with success" (p. 69).

8. The spirit of reverence: "The spirit of reverence cherished in the heart of the teacher will be manifested outwardly in positive ways that will tend to inspire reverence in the hearts of others" (p. 80).

9. The spirit of prayer: "Consider prayer in its relation to the work of a Sabbath School teacher. Is not the spirit of intercession our great need?" (p. 93).

10. The spirit of discernment: "Do we distinguish clearly that which should be first in our lives? . . . One who desires the spirit of true discernment must recognize it as the spirit of wisdom. Every day he must decide that question" (pp. 98, 101).

11. The spirit of thankfulness: "Sabbath School teacher should train themselves in giving genuine expressions of gratitude whenever and wherever possible" (p. 108).

12. The spirit of wholeheartedness: "'The Lord would have teacher in the Sabbath school work who can give wholehearted service, who will increase their talent by exercise, and make improvement on what has already been attained'" (p. 111).¹⁰

13. The spirit of punctuality: "Sabbath School workers must be punctual. Punctuality is a mark of true leadership" (p. 118).

¹⁰Quoted from *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 122.

Assignment 3

YOUR STRONG AND WEAK POINTS

- *Be sure to record on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed Assignment 3.*

Go through the lists from Mary Hunter Moore and Flora Plummer and identify what you consider your strong points and weak points. If you are studying on your own, write a paragraph explaining how you can work at strengthening your weak points. If you are studying in a group, your instructor will advise about this assignment. There is no grade for this assignment.

Small Group Activity

As a group, go over the lists from Mary Hunter Moore and Flora Plummer and discuss the various aspects of the "spirit" of the teacher noted. How do these function in your particular culture or in your Sabbath School?

The primary focus of the discussion should be to identify personal or collective weak points and how to correct them.

For instance, the concept of punctuality varies from culture to culture. Nevertheless, one of the primary concerns expressed worldwide is how to encourage people to arrive on time to Sabbath School! How does the punctuality of the teacher affect the punctuality of the students?

Reading 2

The Most Effective Teaching

- Be sure to record on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have read this article.

From: Chapter 4 in Marion Lawrence, *Building Better Sabbath Schools* (Takoma Park, Washington D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1924).

The most effective teaching is done when the teacher does not know that he is teaching. Teaching is not putting facts into a pupil's mind as you put corn into the bin. That only is teaching which finds expression in the daily life. Teaching is not training a mind but training a life.

The purpose of this chapter is to consider how and what we are teaching when we are not teaching at all. Only a small part of teaching can be put into words. It is done in silence. Nature does her greatest work in silence. The changing of the seasons, the coming of day and night, the opening of the buds, the ripening of the fruit—all are done in silence; likewise, the teacher's greatest work.

What is it we are talking about? It is the teacher himself, the moral power of the teacher's own person, the radiating influence of the teacher's whole life. It is the teacher summed up. The unconscious teaching is really the teacher.

Every individual is really a double person. Not only is he the person people think him to be, but he is the person God knows him to be. The first is reputation; the second is character. Character is bought with a great price. It is the teacher's chief asset. Somebody has said that "a cannon must be one hundred times as heavy as the shot it puts." In other words, the teacher's life is the life of his teaching, and this is unconscious tuition.

This unconscious tuition has three characteristics, namely:

1. It is involuntary.
2. It is incessant.
3. It is inevitable.

These facts should awe us into a true realization of the dignity of our office as teachers. Here, indeed, is the measuring rod for Sabbath school teachers.

Now there are various means of communicating this unspoken part of our teaching. We shall mention but three:

I. Our Mental Frame

Much depends upon our mental frame, and teachers neglect it at their peril. There are many ingredients that enter into its composition. We shall speak of but a few.

1. *Self-control*.—Supremacy lies in self-control and being well poised. No one can hope to control others who cannot control himself. Self-control does not come by accident but by strong will power and much practice. "No man who understands himself ever appears to be out of place."

2. *Contentment*.—What we really mean is good nature and is wholly an inner quality. It means that we are at peace, unworried, not easily fretted or irritated. "Contentment with godliness is great gain."

3. *Confidence*.—By this we do not mean conceit nor being puffed up; not pride in one's ability but consciousness of one's strength, confidence in oneself, confidence in his message, confidence in his ability to give the message. Confidence always begets confidence. How true this is when the trusted family doctor speaks an encouraging word about the dear one who lies sick. Confidence spreads through the house like a summer breeze. Confidence

shows that one feels equal to the occasion. It is reserve power. The tasks of the world are done by the people who believe they can do them. Virgil said:

“They bring success their zeal to fan.
They can because they think they can.”

4. *Patience*.—This is an exceedingly hard grace to cultivate. Someone has said, “He that can have patience can have what he will”; another, “Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet.”

The following beautiful lines from Georgiana Kingle Holmes are most suggestive and helpful:

“They are such dear, familiar feet that go
Along the path with ours—feet fast or slow,
And trying to keep pace—if they mistake
Or tread upon some flower that we would take
Upon our breast, or bruise some reed,
Or crush poor hope until it bleed,
We may be mute,
Not turning to impute
Grave fault: for they and we
Have such a little way to go—can be
Together such a little while upon the way,
We will be patient while we may.

“So many little faults we find,
We see them ! For not blind
Is love, we see them, but if you and I
Perhaps remember them some by and by,
They will not be
Faults then—grave faults—to you and me,
But just odd ways—mistakes, or even less,
Remembrances to bless.
Days change so many things—yes, hours,
We see so differently in the suns and showers.
Mistaken words tonight
May be so cherished by tomorrow’s light;
We may be patient, for we know
There’s such a little way to go.”

5. *Sincerity*.—This means genuine, wholehearted, transparent, and true. Sincerity is the key to all hearts, especially the hearts of children and young people. They are good judges, too, and at the last we pass for our true worth.

6. *Unselfishness*.—No one can impart the real lessons of life with selfishness in his heart. He must have true perspective. Self-seeking always belittles; self-effacement enlarges. The humble are lifted up; the proud cast down. Genuine love to God and to the pupils is the engine that should drive us to our task, never any desire to shine as a teacher, but to help as a friend. As Dr. Watkinson says, “The selfish man has come too late.”

7. *Sympathy*.—The world is ruled by sympathy and love, and the world is hungry for it. Our scholars are hungry for it likewise. The scholars in your class, who face you every Sabbath, are hungry for sympathy. They will not tell you so, but it is the truth nevertheless. A word of sympathy unlocks the heart and opens the way for helpfulness. Sympathetic folks are the angels of mercy. We have no greater task, as Sabbath school teachers, than expressing to our scholars and to the world the love and sympathy of God.

All are moved by sympathy. William Reynolds used to tell the story of a man who was traveling in a sleeping car, with a crying baby. The baby cried until the middle of the night, when some of the passengers became quite out of patience, and one man said to the father of the baby, "You should have left that baby at home with its mother; a man has no business to be traveling with a crying baby. We paid good money for our sleeping accommodations, and we have a right to sleep." The man responded that he wished he could leave that baby with its mother, but that the mother was dead and was in her coffin in the baggage car. He was taking her to the East, to bury her where he married her. Upon hearing this, a great stalwart fellow rolled out of the upper berth and asked the father of the baby how long he had been on the train. He replied that he had been there two nights and had still another night to travel. He thought the baby was sick but was doing his best to keep the baby quiet. The bighearted man replied, "Give me that baby!! You need rest and sleep more than that baby does. We have some babies at our house, and I think I can keep the baby quiet while you sleep." He took the crying baby on his arm and, in a low, sweet voice—even if it was a man's voice—sang to the baby as he walked up and down the aisle, "Hush, my dear; lie still and slumber. Holy angels guard thy bed." By and by, the baby's cries began to subside. They soon changed into a coo, and then baby fell asleep. The tired father was slumbering deeply, and the heavy breathing indicated that everybody in the car was sleeping. The benefactor then parted the curtains and laid the sleeping baby down by the side of the father and again repaired to his own berth. The "holy angel" that guarded that baby's bed that night was six feet tall in his stocking feet and probably weighed two hundred pounds! The world needs that sort of sympathy.

8. *Cheerfulness*.—By this we do not mean funny but just happy, buoyant, overflowing with joy, the real joy of the Lord. "The joy of the Lord is your strength," says Nehemiah. Amiability is power. Cheerfulness is more than pleasantness. It is not always revealed by outward expression. The cheerful people are always the popular people, while everybody gives the grouch a wide berth. Arnold said, speaking of a teacher, "He should not take his work as a dose." Old Xenophon said, "He cannot teach who does not please."

Cheerfulness can be cultivated, but it seems that many do not try. Right well do I remember reading an advertisement in an English paper, while taking a few days' rest at Margate, which ran something as follows: "WANTED: A governess in a small family. Must be a Christian—cheerful, if possible."

9. *Earnestness*.—We are in serious business, in teaching boys and girls [and men and women] who are to live in another world. It will not do to trifle. While we must be cheerful and happy, we must, nevertheless, be tremendously in earnest. Impress your scholars that you have lived a whole week looking forward to this opportunity. The teacher should know what he is after, and go after it with all the power that he has. The teacher should be tremendously in earnest.

These are not the only ingredients in the mental frame, but they will go far. When a teacher with this frame of mind arrives in the class, order begins at once, for the scholars recognize that order must be established, and they will desire to have it so.

II. The Face

This is another method of communicating this unconscious tuition. We teach by our faces. The face is a public signboard, "the playground of all the imps or angels who dwell inside." It is an index of one's real self. People run from a storm but love to dwell in the sunshine. Thunderclouds mean defeat. Pupils read our faces as we read a book. Our faces were made to reflect the spirit of our inner life. Chrysostom said of Bishop Flavian, "The countenances of holy men are full of spiritual power."

I do not wish to frighten any one who reads this chapter, but I must say it is the duty of every Sabbath school teacher to be good-looking; not pretty or handsome necessarily, but to have a face that looks good. "Many a face not beautiful nor even symmetrical is noble

with moral dignity and radiant with spiritual power." Such faces, however, are not acquired at the drug store.

The good face can be cultivated. It takes the pain of bitter experience oftentimes, and yet it is this very thing that often brings the face to its greatest expression of power. Well do I remember my mother, whose face would not be counted beautiful, but it was a face full of sweetness and beauty, and just to look into it made us children want to be obedient and good.

A smiling face is a benediction, and smiling is a fine art.

Smile awhile,
And while you smile,
Another smiles,
And soon there are miles and miles of smiles,
Because you smile."

Little do we realize the true worth of a smile.

"The thing that goes the farthest toward making life worth
while,
That costs the least and does the most—is just a pleasant
smile.

The smile that bubbles from the heart that loves his fellow
men

Will drive away the clouds of gloom and coax the sun again.
It's full of worth, and goodness, too, with manly kindness
bent—

It's worth a million dollars, and it doesn't cost a cent. There is no room for sadness when we see a cheery smile; It always has the same good look—it's never out of style; It nerves us on to try again when failure makes us blue; Such dimples of encouragement are good for me and you. So smile away; folks understand what by a smile is meant—It's worth a million dollars, and it doesn't cost a cent."

In speaking of the face, it is well to refer specifically to the eye. Someone has said that the eye is the born prince of the schoolroom. Really, it is the scepter of power. Order is maintained many times by just a glance. In Psalms 32:8, God says, "I will guide thee with Mine eye." There is power in the eye.

III. The Voice

Here is another way by which unconscious tuition is communicated. We do not refer to the words that are spoken but to the sound of the voice. The sound carries conviction and has tremendous power. It was said of Charles G. Finney, the great preacher and evangelist, president of Oberlin College, that he could make an audience weep simply by his voice as he repeated the Lord's prayer.

There is persuasion, entreaty, command, in the tone of the voice. The voice will often quiet the maniac, comfort the discouraged, hearten the sick, and put the baby to sleep. The voice of that great and wonderful Quakeress, Elizabeth Fry, is often referred to as a fine illustration. When she entered Newgate jail and appeared among the criminals, the very quality of her voice, as she read the Scripture, offered prayer, or sang a hymn, would quiet the disturbance and draw to her those who were innocent of heart or sought to be.

In Proverbs 15:1 we read, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." All Christian workers should cultivate their voices. They should be perfectly natural and not assume any lofty airs, such as the rolling of their voices in big-sounding tones. The story is told of a minister's wife who reproved her husband at home one day for reading the newspaper in his "Scripture" voice. There is music and power in the voice.

These three:

1. The Mental Frame
2. The Face
3. The Voice

are the most powerful agencies by which we communicate this unconscious teaching. If we were to draw a line below them and add, in order to find their sum, it probably could not be expressed in one word. The nearest word I know would be *atmosphere* or possibly *radiation* (sic.). The influence of such a life is breathed. "The very presence of some people is a sanctuary." It was said of Robert Moffat, the great missionary, when returning from the foreign field in his advanced years, that the people in the churches where he was to speak would rise, unbidden, as he entered. This was simply the holy influence of a holy life.

The teacher's power, after all, is the sum of what he is. The best part of our teaching is done unconsciously. Someone said, "It was the way Henry Drummond laid his hand on my shoulder that made a Christian out of me." No wonder the people of Labrador almost worship Wilfred Grenfell. It is because he has taught them the way to God by his poured-out life.

Teacher, what is your total impression on your class? Remember, the roots of all moral strength run back under the soil of self-sacrifice and right living. The apostle Paul said repeatedly, in his letters to the churches, "Follow me as I follow Christ." Would this be safe for you, for me, to say? The teacher should be what he seeks to have his scholars become. The world wants a gospel that it can see, for comparatively few are reading the gospel in the Book.

"You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day,
By deeds that you do, by words that you say.
Men read what you write, whether faithless or true;
Say, what is the gospel according to you?"

A teacher's life is the life of his teaching.

What Have You Learned?

Study the supplemental reading and answer the following questions:

- *Be sure to record on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have read this article.*

My score ____/30

7. What does the author mean by the statement "The most effective teaching is done when the teacher does not know that he is teaching." [4 points]
8. What does the author mean by the phrase "It [teaching] is done in silence." [2 points]
9. What is "unconscious tuition"? [2 points]
10. List the nine qualities that the author names as a "mental frame". [9 points].
11. How do these nine qualities compare with the other lists we have looked at in this unit? [5 points].
12. According to the author, why are the face and the voice so important? [8 points].

Reading 3

The Christian Teacher

- *Be sure to record on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have read this article.*

From: Harry W. Lowe, *Handbook for Sabbath School Teachers*, (Washington D. C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1956).

I. INTRODUCTION

1. *The Christian Teacher's Unique Position*

The Christian teacher is in a class apart from all other teachers. The teacher of secular subjects may be quite successful at imparting knowledge in the classroom, yet he may be anything but honorable in private life. His teaching is based upon what he knows, and not necessarily upon what he is.

2. *The Christian Teacher's Personal Life*

In religious teaching what a man knows is inseparably connected with what he is. It has been well said that what a teacher is counts far more than what he says. Unless the Christian teacher is living a life in harmony with his teaching, then the result of his teaching will be drastically minimized, and, so far as some of his pupils are concerned, it may be ruined.

This brings us to the question: What is a Christian teacher? We will take first this definition from an acknowledged authority:

A Christian teacher is one who, having experienced a personal relationship with God through faith in the atoning merits of Christ the Savior, brings to others things new and old in such a way that they cannot gainsay the fact that he is speaking the things that he has seen and heard. (Dr. C. B. Eavey, *Principles of Teaching for Christian Teachers*, p. 71).

The same author says:

The teacher may teach a little by what he says; he teaches more by what he does, but most by what he is. (p. 79).

3. *The Christian Teacher's Authority*

In other words, what a Christian teacher seeks to impart to his class comes with the authority of the teacher's personal experience. He is like the psalmist, and the apostle Paul, who said, "We also believe, and therefore speak" (2 Cor. 4:13). That is perhaps the major thing to keep in mind as we enter upon a consideration of the teacher as the mouthpiece of God to the people.

4. *Are Teachers Born or Made?*

A second question that we should settle at once is this: Are Christian teachers born with the gift of teaching or are they made? Here is the opinion of a very well-known authority on religious education:

We are met at the outset with the cry that teachers are born, not made; that some can teach and some cannot; and that any attempt to train teachers is essentially impossible. Let

us be sure we are justified before we take such a position. I have seen thousands of teachers at work. I have known them as pupils and as individuals. I am frank to admit that some people are so finely organized that they instinctively teach well. This number is not large. I know that most of the successful teachers of today are made, not born. Here, as in almost every sphere of activity that calls for skilled efforts, honest and sustained effort is sure to accomplish a worthy result. Lawyers, doctors, and clergymen are made over under professional discipline and study. Why, then, may we not assert the same of the teacher? We have many excellent teachers in our public schools because they have been trained to teach in some of our many excellent training schools. We shall accomplish equally important advances in our Sabbath school teaching when we accept this truth and act upon it. (Dr. Martin G. Brumbaugh, *The Making of a Teacher*, pp. 155, 156).

Let us, therefore, settle it here and now that we are going to enter enthusiastically and conscientiously upon these studies with a determination to become good teachers if we sense our lack, and even better teachers if we have already experienced the joys of successful teaching. Raising the quality of our teaching is the key to more successful Sabbath schools.

Now let us look at our *ideal teacher*, since he is the key man [person] in these studies.

II. THE TEACHER'S SPIRIT AND EXPERIENCE

1. *Relation Between Teacher's Spirit and His Success*

There is a connection between the teacher's success and the spirit he brings into his work:

The teacher's success will depend largely upon the spirit which is brought into the work. A profession of faith does not make men Christians. — *Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 433.

The spirit of the teacher is not just enthusiasm. It certainly is not a demonstrative manner, a conscious striving for effect. It is rather the expression of the teacher's whole personality, fortified by his spiritual experience. These things will inspire a person so that the class feels that he really believes and enjoys the things he teaches. Happiness, assurance, faith, winsomeness, balance, experience, zeal, are all included in the contagious spirit of the teacher. When he has this kind of spirit, his pupils will be inclined to accept the faith he professes. They know that his profession and his practice agree.

The famous Daniel Defoe, author of *Robinson Crusoe*, pictured a certain godly Dr. Annesley, of whom his hearers said: "We loved the doctrine for the teacher's sake" That is largely true of any teacher or preacher whose spirit and experience touch people's hearts. This serves to show that the first step in raising the standard of our teaching begins with the teacher himself.

2. *Necessity of Communion With God*

A teacher with the right spirit knows that he can maintain his spiritual forces only by habitual communion with God. Christian teaching is spiritual work of the highest order. If the things of God are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14), then a teacher must live close to the Lord to obtain and maintain spiritual discernment.

3. *Prayerfulness and Accountability for Souls*

Communicating spiritual truths to a class lays a heavy responsibility for souls upon a teacher. For this he is accountable to God:

Sabbath school teachers have need of walking carefully and prayerfully before God. They must labor as those who must give an account. — *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 80.

The prayer life of the teacher must center in three things: (a) He will pray for his own daily infilling of the Spirit, which alone can give him victory, calmness of soul, and understanding of spiritual things. (b) He will pray for increasing light on the Holy Word, which is the substance of his meditations and the material he is to communicate to his class. (c) He will pray for the pupils in his class. Some of these pupils will be struggling with problems known or unknown to the teacher. Others may be unconverted. Even the converted may be in spiritual perplexity. All the pupils are in need of further light from God's Word.

4. *Intellectual Culture and Spiritual Fitness*

This question of the teacher's empowerment is expressed in many ways in the Spirit of prophecy, and quite often in connection with his responsibility for souls:

It is not enough that the teacher possess natural ability and intellectual culture. These are indispensable, but without a spiritual fitness for the work he is not prepared to engage in it. He should see in every pupil the handiwork of God,—a candidate for immortal honors. — *Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 229.

5. *Spiritual Fitness Essential*

We shall later study the matter of natural and acquired teaching ability, but here we must stress the primary question of spiritual fitness for teaching. It is in Christ alone that our spiritual fitness and our essential knowledge are to be found:

Every Christian teacher should have an intelligent understanding of what Christ is to him individually. He should know how to make the Lord his strength and efficiency; how to commit the keeping of his soul to God as unto a faithful Creator. From Christ proceeds all the knowledge essential to enable teachers to be workers together with God,—knowledge which opens to them the widest fields of usefulness. — *Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 229.

6. *The Character Molded by Spirituality*

The teacher's spirit and experience affect his whole character. The outward evidences of a teacher's character can be painfully or pleasantly evident to his class. If he shows evidence of impatience, temper, or stubbornness, the pupils will note it with regret, and the efficacy of his teaching suffers to some extent. If he is patient and kind under provocation, calm and self-possessed under all conditions, the pupils admire these things, and will more readily accept his teaching:

The teachers who work in this part of the Lord's vineyard need to be self-possessed, to keep their temper and feelings under control, and in subjection to the Holy Spirit. They should give evidence of having, not a one-sided experience, but a well-balanced mind, a symmetrical character. — *Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 229.

III. THE TEACHER'S MENTAL ATTITUDE

The Peril of Dull Thoughts, Indolence, Loose Memory

There is one deadly habit we need to watch as teachers, and that is the habit of dull, listless thinking. This leads to saying things in the same tame way every time we face a class or meet with people. If you know from the moment a person begins a sentence exactly

what he is going to say, you get bored. If your pupils know that on any given subject you are going to say exactly what they heard you say the last time that subject was discussed, you are going to have a dull class, and dull classes lead to absences from Sabbath school.

Here is a Spirit of prophecy gem on this line of thought:

The true teacher is not content with dull thoughts, an indolent mind, or a loose memory. He constantly seeks higher attainments and better methods. His life is one of continual growth. In the work of such a teacher there is a freshness, a quickening power, that awakens and inspires his pupils. —
Education, p. 278.

"Dull thoughts," "an indolent mind," "a loose memory"— here is the highroad to failure in Sabbath school teaching!

a. Dull thoughts. —What is the remedy for dull thinking? Here is a simple remedial suggestion. When you meet a friend you have not seen for some time, you probably say something that is common with you, such as: Well, of all things! Long time no see!" Examine yourself and make up your mind to vary that greeting. The next time you write to friends, make up your mind to say something different. Greet your neighbors in different words, et cetera. When it comes to Bible teaching, think of other ways to say things, new texts to quote, write out new questions, give a little more time to study. Even standing before a class and beginning every week with a smile and a "Good Morning, Everybody!" can become dull because it is always expected. Do things differently as often as you can, and dullness will disappear.

b. An indolent mind.— In plain English, this means laziness. If you want a successful class, you, as the teacher, must WORK. For this there is no substitute. No aids of any kind can eliminate work. We shall suggest some that will help you make the best use of your time, to do a better job; but none to cut out work. So make up your mind at once that a large part of successful teaching, and the cure for mental laziness, is work. Someone once said that WORK is spelled T-I-M-E. Study and preparation take time. If you think you don't have time, wait till we are through and you may change your mind, because there is a remedy for this.

c. A loose memory.—Most of us suffer memorywise. But there are ways and means of aiding our memories, which we shall deal with more fully in a later lesson. Here let us say that in general *we do not forget the things that are of deep personal concern to us*. For example, you know how much your rent is, or how much your house cost; you know the price of your car, the amount of your taxes and your earnings, et cetera, because these things are deep in your interest.

The things of God should be of deep concern to us, and the deeper our concern over them, the better we shall remember them. There are, of course, circumstances that modify these observations, such as illness, the cares of a hard life, et cetera, but even these handicaps can be faced and overcome to a great extent by certain methods to be discussed later.

Let us remember this sentence while we are thinking of the mental attitude of the teacher, for it will help to fix things in the memory:

The teaching of the Bible should have our freshest thought, our best methods, and our most earnest effort. — *Education*, p. 278.

Sometimes a teacher falls victim unconsciously to the "I know it all" complex. We are not appointed to teach because we know, but because we know a little and seek to know more. What we do not know now, we seek to know without delay. In other words, a teacher is still a learner:

If you are called to be a teacher, you are called to be a learner also. If you take upon yourself the sacred responsibility of teaching others, you take upon yourself the duty of becoming master of every subject you seek to teach. — *Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 199.

To master every subject we teach has, of course, a comparative meaning, because there are deep mysteries in religion that we shall never know this side of eternity. But as far as the Bible has revealed them, we can know them; and as far as our pupils are concerned, we can acquire a knowledge of these deep things sufficiently to call forth the understanding and devotion of the class. There should be no lack of knowledge because of our failure to study:

The one who shall accept the responsibility of teacher, if not fully qualified, if he senses the responsibility of his position, will do his utmost to learn. — *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 97.

There are a number of almost intangible things required of a teacher, some of which we can deal with here, others must be left to the good judgment of the teacher. Let us set it down here that God accepts a teacher's service on certain conditions, which we may summarize in this text:

For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not (2 Cor. 8:22).

While we set our standards high, let us remember that God knows our native and acquired abilities, our heredity and our environment, our virtues and weaknesses, our potentialities and our limitations, and He accepts our service and blesses it when we use *to His glory the best that is in us*.

IV. THE TEACHER'S RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

1. Humility and Divine Empowerment.

A truly wise teacher is a *humble, converted person*. He knows his own limitations. He understands that only by God's grace can he stand up to the requirements, the effort, the sustained responsibility, of teaching a class.

Paul, the great doctrinal teacher of the New Testament, was apparently in danger of self-exaltation at one time. For this reason God allowed a physical limitation to come upon him Paul called it "a thorn in the flesh." It must have been really irksome to this dynamic man, and after three deep prayer sessions for the removal of this impediment, the answer given to Paul was: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12: 9).

All Christian workers have to learn this lesson, especially our teachers. We must not allow our weaknesses, our limitations, to discourage us, for in Christ there is grace for every need; nor, on the other hand, must we allow our ability to destroy our usefulness, for Christ gives grace to save us from ourselves. Paul attributed all his success to this marvelous grace of Christ:

"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." (1 Cor. 15:10).

We may feel we are earthen vessels, but we must never forget that God uses such vessels if they are fully surrendered to Him: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor. 4:7).

In this connection we are going to talk about study methods, study aids, and ways of acquiring knowledge and wisdom. If schooling and native ability were all that men needed to preach Christ, Paul had it all long before he became a Christian. After he found Christ he

was at great pains to proclaim that *knowing Christ was more important than earthly wisdom*:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified, et cetera. (1 Cor. 2:1,2).

The consequence of all this was that “the greatest of human teachers, Paul accepted the lowliest as well as the highest duties.” — *Education*, p. 66.

The human element in us enjoys the “highest duties,” the prominent position; but the man who can fill either the lowliest or highest duties with equal willingness requires a heart full of divine grace.

1. *Love for Souls*

The successful teacher must be a *lover of souls*. This is repeatedly emphasized in the counsels to the church:

Have you so deep an appreciation of the sacrifice made on Calvary that you are willing to make every other interest subordinate to the work of saving souls? The same intensity of desire to save sinners that marked the life of the Saviour marks the life of His true follower. The Christian has no desire to live for self. He delights to consecrate all that he has and is to the Master's service. He is moved by an inexpressible desire to win souls to Christ. Those who have nothing of this desire might better be concerned for their own salvation. Let them pray for the spirit of service. — *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 10.

2. *The Spirit of Sacrifice*

The Sabbath school teacher is not called upon to face the rigors of a life of overseas service for the heathen, but there are nevertheless certain sacrifices required of him, if he is to succeed. His time, his willingness to cultivate the friendship of his pupils, his ability to face a weekly routine that may sometimes appear monotonous, his readiness to take a humble part and to attend to relatively small duties, his faithfulness as a Sabbath school teamworker—all these will come readily from him, if he knows his Master:

The transforming power of Christ's grace molds the one who gives himself to God's service. Imbued with the Spirit of the Redeemer, he is ready to deny self, ready to take up the cross, ready to make any sacrifice for the Master. No longer can he be indifferent to the souls perishing around him. He is lifted above self-serving. He has been created anew in Christ, and self-serving has no place in his life. He realizes that every part of his being belongs to Christ, who has redeemed him from the slavery of sin; that every moment of his future has been bought with the precious lifeblood of God's only-begotten Son. — *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 9, 10.

V. THE TEACHER'S PERSONALITY

1. *Being One's Self*

Of all the human factors that go to make a successful teacher, it has been said that the greatest is—himself, for the elusive thing called ‘personality’ is nothing more than the quality of being a person. The term means all the factors in a person's being that exert influence over others. (*Principles of Teaching for Christian Teachers*, p. 78).

2. *What Is Personality?*

Personality is hard to define. It is not a finished product with which we all enter the world. It is very *largely the result of what we do with the talents given us by heredity*. Our experiences, our endeavors to learn, our attitude to God and our fellow men, our occupations, our relations, our inherited tendencies—these all enter into the personality. By self-examination we can discover our weaknesses; by God's grace we may overcome many of them; by study and diligence we may acquire new knowledge and new experience. By contact with our fellows we see life from new angles. Thus we change, however imperceptibly, our attitude to the world around us, and that influences our personality.

When we meet Jesus and are truly converted, then a still greater change begins. Christian personality from that moment becomes more and more a reflection of Christ's personality through us as individuals. It grows in the crucible of experience and service.

3. *Personality as a Divine Trust*

Whatever a teacher's personality, he must have *fixed objectives* in his work for God.

This counsel to Christian workers applies to us as teachers who seek to impress truth upon our fellows:

Through persevering exertion they may rise to almost any degree of eminence as Christians, as men of power and influence. But many will never attain superior rank . . . because of their unfixedness of purpose. . . . Careless inattention is seen in everything they undertake. — *Gospel Workers*, p. 278.

4. *Personality in Relation to Balance and Cooperation*

Our *personality is a divine trust*, and it is ours in the unique sense that it differs with the individual. It makes us different from all others:

Stand in your God-given personality. Be no other person's shadow. Expect that the Lord will work in and by and through you. — *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 499.

It is characteristic of men today that they mainly follow like sheep. Few men do their own thinking. It is said that 2 per cent lead and 98 per cent follow. When that enters into our religious life we are in danger. We cannot do all of our own original study, but we must do some of our own thinking if we as individuals are to know Christ. God gave us these minds and these personalities to use for His glory:

God has given us reasoning powers, not to remain inactive, or to be perverted to earthly and sordid pursuits, but that they may be developed to the utmost, refined, sanctified, ennobled, and used in advancing the interests of His kingdom. — *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 498.

5. *Personality and Balance*

Differences in personality must be compatible with *cooperation and balance*. A Sabbath school teacher is not an isolated unit. He is one member of a team, and he must pull with, not against, the others. "An effective teacher is a balanced personality," it has been said. A teacher must do his own study and thinking, but he must cooperate with his Sabbath school officers and fellow teachers in such matters as:

a. Loyalty to doctrinal teachings.—The teacher will adhere to the doctrinal teachings of the denomination as set forth in the *Lesson Quarterly*. If he has private views on doctrine, pet ideas on prophecy, extreme views on health reform, et cetera, he will avoid them in his classwork. Surrendering private opinions in this way is a valuable spiritual experience for a teacher.

One point will have to be guarded, and that is individual independence. As soldiers in Christ's army, there should be concert of action in the various departments of the work. No one has the right to start out on his own responsibility and advance ideas . . . on Bible doctrines when it is known that others among us hold different opinions on the subject and that it will create controversy. — *Testimonies*. vol. 5. pp. 534, 535.

b. Promoting the spirit of missions.—When the total Sabbath school offerings goal is agreed upon each year, it is broken down into goals for each division, and then for each class. The teacher should call attention to the amount raised each week in his class, expressing thanks when over, and encouragement when below, the class goal. Commenting occasionally on the missions reading, and other aspects of our denominational world mission program, is a part of the teacher's cooperative teamwork. The personality and influence of the teacher thus lends strong support to the mission program of the Advent cause.

c. Fostering soul-winning evangelism.—We have a comprehensive program of Sabbath school soul winning today. Branch Sabbath schools and Vacation Bible Schools are now well-organized efforts for neighborhood evangelism for children and adults. When the Sabbath school council launches such endeavors, our teachers should encourage prayerful and practical support by all our members.

d. Caring for attendance, offerings, and other records as requested by the officers.—If the officers particularly wish to record the names or number of visitors, the attendance of members, and the amount of the offering, teachers are the ones on whom they depend. It takes but a few minutes each week, and makes for orderly schools, when teachers pull together in such matters.

e. Attendance at teachers' meeting.—Our teaching would be strengthened if all teachers met for a good teachers' meeting each week, preferably in midweek, but at any time rather than not at all.

Forty-five minutes at the most, in such a meeting, allows for all that is necessary. It should not be another teaching of the lesson, but should provide for a discussion of the high points of the lesson, of the difficulties and questionable matters that may arise; a discussion of any specific class problems, such as a class where pupil-participation is nil, or one where some members talk too much. A regular meeting of this kind, even if kept to thirty minutes, binds the teachers together, increases their efficiency, and blesses the school. The inspiration of one personality on another is thus a constructive factor to our teachers.

A teacher whose personality is alert and progressive will miss no chance to attend *Teacher Training Courses, workshops, conventions*, or to read recommended books and magazines. These things are part of the progressive teacher's life. They increase his efficiency and keep him abreast of the times in respect to his work in the church.

6. *Combining Cheerfulness and Reverence*

The teacher's personality must be *both cheerful and reverent*.

If a class is always in a surge of laughter, something is wrong. Something is also strange if a teacher is so solemn that neither he nor his class ever smiles. "The teacher may have reverence and yet be cheerful." — *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*. p. 98.

The things of God are glorious and gladdening; let us teach them with gladness. The things of God are also serious; let us act and talk reverently as we teach and study them.

7. *Combining Enthusiasm, Dignity, and Inspiration*

The *personality must combine enthusiasm, dignity, inspiration, and it must arouse thought, energy, courage, life*. The servant of God has said: "Teachers are needed who with

enthusiasm combine true dignity; ... who can inspire thought, arouse energy, and impart courage and life." — *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 103.

Enthusiasm runs away with some people to the extent that they lose their dignity. It must not be just effervescence, but deep and vital enjoyment of God's truth. Dignity may become so severe and overdone that it stifles thought and energy. It should be a combination of joy and seriousness, which comes with the consciousness of God's presence. When we have these combinations we shall find energy, courage, and life in the truest sense.

VI. THE TEACHER'S INFLUENCE ON OTHERS

1. *A Marked Influence on Others*

A teacher's character and personality have a marked influence on others, especially upon his class. We have been exhorted to bring peace, love, cheerfulness into our teaching, and not to be fretful, impatient, arbitrary, dictatorial. — *Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 233.

2. *The Unruffled Spirit Under Trial*

Teaching does sometimes bring us into trying situations. An argumentative person, a few who will never study, a pupil who never pays attention, a couple who sit and talk during class—a few factors like this may become provoking. But we must remember that— "the consistent life, the patient forbearance, the *spirit unruffled under provocation*, is always the most conclusive argument and the most solemn appeal." — *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 101 (Italics supplied).

3. *Dealing With the Inconsistent and Unreasonable*

Even though we may be *dealing with unreasonable and inconsistent* people, we must preserve our consideration and kindness. We have been told:

Until the judgment you will never know the influence of a kind, considerate course toward the inconsistent, the unreasonable, the unworthy.-
— *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 101.

4. *Experience and Character Affect Others*

A teacher's *character and experience* are expressed through his personality. Character and experience are inseparable. They determine to a large extent our influence upon others, and especially upon the class members who have so much to do with us:

It is our own character and experience that determine our influence upon others. In order to convince others of the power of Christ's grace, we must know its power in our own hearts and lives. The gospel we present for the saving of souls must be the gospel by which our own souls are saved. Only through a living faith in Christ as a personal Saviour is it possible to make our influence felt in a skeptical world. If we would draw sinners out of the swift-running current, our own feet must be firmly set upon the Rock, Christ Jesus.
— *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, pp. 99, 100.

5. *Effect of Voice, Gestures, Mannerisms, Dress*

We influence others both consciously and unconsciously by our *voice, gestures, mannerisms, dress*. These are externals, but they are important as the outward expressions of our inner experience and intention. They are important, too, as the vehicles by which our

pupils register impressions both of us and of the lesson. All that our pupils learn of the lesson, as of everything else, comes to them through their five senses; hence what they see of and hear from us is at all times of major importance. Here are some Spirit of prophecy gems on these matters:

a. *The voice.*—

We are to be laborers together with the heavenly angels in presenting Jesus to the world. With almost impatient eagerness the angels wait for our co-operation; for man must be the channel to communicate with man. And when we give ourselves to Christ in wholehearted devotion, angels rejoice that they may speak through our voices to reveal God's love. — *Desire of Ages*, p. 297.

A channel so important as the voice is surely worth cultivating. Our teachers should open the mouth and enunciate clearly. If you had a deaf-mute in your class, he should be able to lip-read if you speak correctly. We should speak loud enough for every pupil to hear distinctly, but not so loud that the next class and the whole school can hear.

One more quotation should be noted here:

O that all might search diligently to know what is truth, to study earnestly that they might have correct language and cultivated voices. — *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 256.

b. *Gestures and mannerisms.*—We should not depend upon gestures to impress truth, but they have some bearing on the pupil's impressions of what we try to teach. Can you imagine Jesus on the shore of Galilee, surrounded by a crowd 'of eager, expectant, and sick people, teaching the parable of the sower, and not raising His hand toward the plain of Gennesaret, where "both sowers and reapers were busy, the one casting seed and the other harvesting the early grain"? He "lifted up his eyes to heaven" when offering the marvelous "the hour is come" prayer to His Father." He "called a little child ... and set him in the midst of them" when illustrating conversion." "He took the damsel by the hand" when restoring her to life." He "stooped down, and wrote on the ground" when saving the adulteress from the scribes and Pharisees." So Jesus used suitable gestures, though He did not depend on them altogether." We should not gesture so that we swing the arms like a windmill all the time, nor should we stand like a lifeless statue.

Mannerisms are excessive adherence to peculiar habits of movement or gesture, which become annoying or amusing to those who have to watch them. Pulling the nose continually with thumb and finger, smoothing the hair every few seconds, jerking the shoulders up and head forward repeatedly, thumping the right hand resoundingly into the left hand, etcetera— all these may irritate pupils and detract from the lesson study. Ask a good friend whether you have such mannerisms, and if you do, try to eradicate them.

c. *Dress and appearance.*—Appearances are deceptive. We tend to judge men by outward appearance, but "the Lord looketh on the heart." Outward appearance is not necessarily an index to character." — *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 322. Nevertheless, after a man is converted, his appearance and dress have some bearing on his profession as a Christian:

Not only by their profession, but by their character and dress, all are to have a winning influence. — *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 207.

There should be no carelessness in dress. For Christ's sake, whose witnesses we are, we should seek to make the best of our appearance.... In all things we are to be representatives of Him. Our appearance in every respect should be characterized by neatness, modesty, and purity. . . .

Christians are not to decorate the person with costly array or expensive ornaments. . . . Even the style of the apparel will express the truth of the gospel. — *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 96.

Let us reduce it all to one sentence: *Sabbath school teachers should be pleasing and clear in speech, easy and attractive in gesture and manner, well and neatly but not overdressed, in all these rightly representing the standards of this truth.*

6. *Importance of Punctuality, Composure, Order*

Punctuality, composure, and order are necessary in the successful teacher.

We have this counsel regarding the appointment of suitable teachers:

Those whose duty it is to select teachers should be guarded, and not urge those into the school who are not fitted to exert good influence. How is the teacher's behavior? Is he punctual? Is he cleanly and neat? This should have attention; for these qualities are essential in a teacher. How can he enjoin these necessary acquirements upon the class unless they have an example of punctuality, of neatness, composure, and order? If a teacher . . . comes rushing in breathless, behind time, his influence is leading to non-punctuality and disorder. — *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 92.

Teachers who are well prepared will not only be on time, but when they face the class their papers will be in order, their manner composed, and therefore they start off with the great vantage of a favorable impression on the pupils.

VII. THE TEACHER'S OBJECTIVES

The necessity of having an aim is paramount. Without it get nowhere, like the fabled grasshopper who enjoyed the thrill of flying through the air, regardless of where he was going, and who perished in the end.

The world is full of very active people who hop about here and thither but who never accomplish anything worth while because they have never taken time to obtain the wisdom could have were they to give careful consideration to the possible ends and goals of activity in which they engage. (*Principles of Teaching for Christian Teachers*, p. 42).

We must not run "uncertainly," nor fight "as one that beateth the air," as Paul put it. (1 Cor. 9:26). We may state our objectives in simple terms.

1. *To Impart the Facts of the Lesson*

We place this first because the facts of any lesson are the steps by which we progress to the personal applications that religion makes to the soul. You cannot lead a heathen to Christ till you tell him some factual things about sin, the sinner, the Saviour. You do not save a sinner till you have shown him the penalties he faces, and a better way of life in Christ Jesus. Facts are the material upon which the mind operates, and the mind cannot affect the will and the soul without them.

This is why we are so constantly urged to study and feed upon the Word of God:

Both teachers and pupils should awake to the importance of manifesting industry and perseverance in the study of God's word. — *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 94.

Every day you should learn something new from the Scriptures. — *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 266.

Let us give more time to the study of the Bible. We do not understand the Word as we should. — *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 113.

You cannot feed the minds of your pupils with the facts of the lesson unless you have studied them well, absorbed them into your own mind, and are alive with them. A hurried moment on one text in the morning is not Bible study. You should settle it that real preparation takes time. More time is the solution of many a teacher's weakness. There are short cuts and time-saving methods to be studied later, but NONE that eliminates the necessity of taking adequate time to acquire the facts of the lesson, which you are expected to pass on to the pupil as the main structure of the lesson.

2. *To Stimulate and Inspire Thought*

Unless a teacher makes his pupils think, he is not succeeding in his teaching. "Successful teaching is teaching that brings about effective learning." (J. L. Mursell, *Successful Teaching*, p. 1).

When a pupil says after a class: "I never thought of that before," then the teacher is stimulating thought. A teacher who does this habitually will have "a freshness, a quickening power, that awakens and inspires his pupils." — *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 103.

When we ask intelligent questions that cause our pupils hesitate, to think, to discuss, to wonder why, we are inspiring thoughts that are likely to influence the will; and when we reach that stage something is likely to be done in the life.

Jesus had a disconcerting way of making people think for themselves. Notice the following questions, among many, by which He made individuals think about the subjects indicated many of them delicate, but all practical);

Matthew 17:25	"What thinkest thou, Simon?"	Paying tribute
Matthew 18:12	"How think ye?"	The value of one lost sheep
Matthew 21:28	"But what think ye?"	Publicans, harlots, and the kingdom of God
Matthew 22:17	"What thinkest thou?"	Lawfulness of paying tribute to Caesar
Matthew 22:42	"What think ye of Christ?"	Divine Sonship of Jesus.
Matthew 26:53	"Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?"	The divinity of Jesus
Luke 10:36	"Which now of these three?"	The good Samaritan
Luke 13:4	"Think ye that they were sinners above all men?"	The tragedy of the Siloam tower

The fact that people were often silent, spellbound at His words, is proof that He inspired thought, and thereby prepared them for further action regarding His mission. That is what every good teacher must do.

3. *To Win Souls for Christ*

We often use this sentence: "The object of Sabbath school work should be the ingathering of souls." — *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 61.

This does not mean, of course, that the teacher gets conversions every Sabbath, or that he sees results of a spectacular nature. But the cumulative effects of his teaching, of his

personal contacts with pupils, is to lead them nearer and nearer to Jesus. Even if the pastor gets the decision and does the baptizing, the teacher has shared in that glad result.

The teacher must pray, prepare, and teach with a heart- yearning to lead men to Christ:

“The Christian has no desire to live for self. . . . He is moved by an inexpressible desire to win souls to Christ.” — *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 10.

“The influence growing out of Sabbath school work should improve and enlarge the church. . . . There is a most precious missionary field in the Sabbath school.” — *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 9.

Every phase of our work in every division of the school must contribute toward the saving of the soul. We are not to entertain, but to inspire men to the nobility and the saving power of Jesus Christ.

This kind of work is not done *en masse*. It always comes down to the individual, and for this reason the teacher must know his pupils individually.

VIII. CONCLUSION

When a teacher is practicing all these principles of success in teaching, the following results will accrue:

1. The drudgery will go out of teaching, and it will become a joyful service for God.
2. The class group will become a band of fellowship, where eager people contribute each to the other's blessing.
3. The personal visitation of each member will become a pleasure, not just a time-consuming duty. Actually, such occasional visits should be brief and inspiring.
4. The pupil response to wide-awake teaching will result in deep and mutual satisfaction in Bible study, class response, fellowship, and spiritual experience.

What Have You Learned?

- *Be sure to record on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have done this assignment.*

Based on Reading 3, answer the following questions. Try to answer the questions before looking at the Answer Sheet.

My score ____/22

1. How does the Christian teacher's private life affect his classwork? [2 points].
2. What gives authority to the teacher's teaching? [2 points].
3. Are good teachers born, or made? Explain your answer. [5 points].
4. Check the characteristics in the following list that are necessary to arouse the enthusiasm of the class: [6 points]
 - Happiness
 - Sorrowfulness
 - Assurance
 - Pessimism
 - Faith
 - Balanced judgment
 - Cheerfulness
 - Enthusiasm
 - Bitterness
5. What, in your own words, is personality? [2 points].
6. List some things that should be found in a balanced, cooperative teacher. [3 points]
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
7. Name some ways in which a teacher may consciously influence a class favorably. [5 points]
 - 1.
 - 2.

- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What Have You Learned?

Answer Sheet

This is self-grading. For hardcopy, my suggestion is to print and insert this page upside down. The student can check his or her answers by turning the sheet.

My score ____/22

1. How does the Christian teacher's private life affect his classwork? [2 points].

Sample answer. *Unless the Christian teacher is living a life in harmony with his teaching, then the result of his teaching will be drastically minimized, and, so far as some of his pupils are concerned, it may be ruined.*

2. What gives authority to the teacher's teaching? [2 points].

Sample answer. *In other words, what a Christian teacher seeks to impart to his class comes with the authority of the teacher's personal experience. He is like the psalmist, and the apostle Paul, who said, "We also believe, and therefore speak" (2 Cor. 4:13).*

3. Are good teachers born, or made? Explain your answer. [5 points].

Sample answer. *I know that most of the successful teachers of today are made, not born. Here, as in almost every sphere of activity that calls for skilled efforts, honest and sustained effort is sure to accomplish a worthy result.*

4. Check the characteristics in the following list that are necessary to arouse the enthusiasm of the class: [6 points]

- Happiness*
- Sorrowfulness*
- Assurance*
- Pessimism*
- Faith*
- Balanced judgment*
- Cheerfulness*
- Enthusiasm*
- Bitterness*

5. What, in your own words, is personality? [2 points].

Sample answer. *It is very largely the result of what we do with the talents given us by heredity. Our experiences, our endeavors to learn, our attitude to God and our fellow men, our occupations, our relations, our inherited tendencies—these all enter into the personality.*

6. List some things that should be found in a balanced, cooperative teacher. [3 points]

1. *Loyalty to doctrinal teaching*
2. *Promoting the spirit of mission*
3. *Fostering soul-winning evangelism*
4. *Caring for records*
5. *Attendance at teacher's meeting*

Name some ways in which a teacher may consciously influence a class favorably. [5 points]

1. *The Unruffled Spirit Under Trial*
2. *Voice*
3. *Gestures*
4. *Manners*
5. *Dress*
6. *Punctuality*
7. *Composure*
8. *Order*

UNIT 2

The Sabbath School Teacher/Discussion Leader and Wisdom

The Scriptures allude to a philosophy and practice of adult religious education (which is what Sabbath School is), and in a few places describes how it was put into practice. From these allusions and descriptions, it is possible to reconstruct a biblical perspective on adult religious education that applies equally to Sabbath School.

This philosophy of learning is described by the word “wisdom.” In this unit we will study this word in both the Old and New Testaments, and the concepts it identifies, to see what it means and how it applies to Sabbath School.

The Concept of Wisdom

Throughout the Old Testament, especially in the book of Job and what is called “wisdom literature” (Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes), learning is perceived as “the fear of the Lord,” a function of God’s grace. The Hebrew word *chakham* (wisdom) is at the core of the Old Testament concept of learning. It is a broad term, often applied to all of life and its activities, but always connected to God as its originator, and sometimes described as something that comes directly from God (Prov. 1:9; Job 28:23-28).

Wisdom is different from knowledge, understanding, or comprehension. The idea of wisdom represents a higher degree of discernment, and more insight, than the other expressions. As one of the authors we studied in earlier says about the spirit of discernment: “Do we distinguish clearly that which should be first in our lives? . . . One who desires the spirit of true discernment must recognize it as the spirit of wisdom. Every day he must decide that question.”¹¹

Wisdom is learned and passed on through a communication system originating from God and mediated by the Holy Spirit (Ps. 51:6, 11). The New Testament also emphasizes this concept when it says: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5, NKJV).

In the Old Testament, wisdom is a relational concept, in the sense that you can always ask what its object is; “wisdom about what?” or what its source is “wisdom from where?” and get an answer. In Job and Proverbs, it is personified (Job 28, Prov. 1, 8) and becomes a living entity rather than an abstract concept.

Skillful living. At the same time *chakham* (wisdom) is used to indicate skill building astuteness, and all-round successful living. It is applied, for instance, to the skills of those who built the tabernacle in the desert (Exod. 28:3) and to successful soldiers (Prov. 21:22). Wisdom to the Hebrews was a practical thing. It was life and the business of living. This practicality, however, was always connected to a religious core that became the package into which the rest of life was inserted.

Thus, wisdom was both the fundamental principle of the universe and the guide of human life. As one writer says: “The Sages saw Wisdom in Creation and Providence: it is the underlying principal of the universe as it is of human life. To have wisdom and to walk by it is to be in harmony with the Creator. It signifies the building of life on the principle that

¹¹Flora Plummer, *ibid.*, pp. 98, 101).

informs and sustains the universe. Thus: 'The fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom.' 'The fear of the Lord' is just a Hebrew synonym for religion."¹²

Another writer puts it this way: "Wisdom, then, is the ability which God gives a person that enables him to do the right thing, at the right time, in the right place, in the right way."¹³

This leads to a biblical distinction between wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge is often thought of as the sum total of the information accumulated by an individual, in other words, how much information you know about something. In the biblical perspective, the objective of learning is the acquisition of wisdom, not just knowledge.

For instance, Psalm 107:27, 28 says that the skills of sailors may be insufficient if a storm gets too bad "They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end" (NKJV). Calling on the Lord, however, solves the problem: ("Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, and He brings them out of their distresses" (verse 28, NKJV). The "calling on the Lord" part is the essence of real wisdom as opposed to mere knowledge of how to sail a ship.

The Communication of Wisdom in the Old Testament

Out of this perspective of wisdom grows God's fundamental educational question: "The Lord looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand [*Sakal*: 'act wisely'], who seek God" (14:2, NKJV).

The Mosaic legislation. In the second of four sermons of Moses recorded in Deuteronomy, he outlines a teaching system designed to pass on the faith from generation to generation. This, of course, is the exact job of Sabbath School:

"Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the Lord your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the Lord God of your fathers has promised you—'a land flowing with milk and honey.' Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deut, 6:1-9, NKJV).

The ecclesiastical calendar. The Israelite ecclesiastical calendar, the annual cycle of religious festivals, was an educational tool. Participation in religious festivals placed them in an environment conducive to concentration on the subject at hand and focused the minds of the participants on the way of the Lord.

Using today's Sabbath School language, priests and Levites were itinerant teacher/discussion leaders in Branch Sabbath Schools. During a revitalization movement in Judah during the reign of Jehoshaphat (872-848 B.C.), for instance, part of the strategy was to

¹²John Paterson, *The Book That Is Alive* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), pp. 50, 51.

¹³Marion E. Cady, *The Education That Educates* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1937), p. 48.

send out teacher/discussion leaders to carry the revival message to the populace (2 Chron. 17:7-10). They taught the "Book of the Law."

Wisdom in the New Testament

The common word for wisdom in the New Testament is *sophia*; the standard Greek word for any kind of intellectual activity. Its meanings range from knowledge of the arts and matters of daily life to mental excellence in its highest and fullest sense. The following chart shows how the word is used.

Sophos (wisdom, skill) in the New Testament

<i>Text</i>	<i>Concept</i>
Matt. 11: 25	"Sophisticated" educated as contrasted with common people
Matt. 23:34	"Wise" men sent from God to the world.
Rom. 1:14	The "wise" and the foolish, a refinement to the Greek nationalistic comparison of "Greeks" and "barbarians."
Rom. 1:22	"Claiming to be wise" — wrong kind of wisdom.
Rom. 16:19	"Wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil." Broad use of the term "wisdom."
Rom. 16:27	"The only wise God." Wisdom in the absolute sense.
1 Cor. 1:19	"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." Contrast between "worldly" and "divine" wisdom, a direct translation of <i>chakham</i> .
1 Cor. 1:20-27	Contrast between the wisdom that comes from God and the wisdom of this world. <i>Sofia</i> is used in each case. The context shows the distinction.
1 Cor. 3:10	"I laid a foundation as an expert builder." A person who knows his or her skill.
1 Cor. 3:18, 19	Become a "fool" to become wise." Describes the conversion process that produces a "new mind."
1 Cor. 3:20	"Thoughts of the wise are futile." The Hebrew in Psalm 94:11 uses <i>machashabah</i> (thought, device, plan) rather than <i>chakham</i> (wise) in this case.
1 Cor. 6:5	"Nobody wise enough." Practical wisdom for everyday living.
Eph. 5:15	Live "not as unwise but as wise." "Unwise" is <i>asophos</i> , "without wisdom."
1 Tim. 1:17	"Only wise God." Wisdom in the absolute sense. See Romans 16:27. Some manuscripts do not include "only wise" God, rather "only God"
James 3:13	How true Christian wisdom is demonstrated, through a Christian lifestyle. This is a close parallel to <i>chakham</i> in the OT.
Jude 25	"Only wise God." Same issue as in 1 Timothy 1:17.

Wisdom Personified

As in the Old Testament, in the New Testament wisdom is personified. She is proven right by her actions (Matt. 11:19), which in the parallel passage in Luke means that she is proven right because her "children" act correctly (Luke 7:35). The power and ability to do this comes from God who imparts the right wisdom: "I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist" (Luke 21:15, NKJV).

Jesus is called "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24, NKJV) who is made unto us "wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (verse 30, NKJV).

Wisdom Must Be Taught

Wisdom, not just knowledge, is what is supposed to be taught as Christians communicate the gospel to the world; "Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily" (Col 1: 28, 29, NKJV).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3: 16, 17, NKJV).

Small Group Activity

In your small group discuss the concept of wisdom. Focus on the difference between wisdom and knowledge and how the biblical concept of wisdom can be applied to Sabbath School teaching.

Assignment 4

APPLYING THE CONCEPT OF WISDOM

Be sure to record on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have done this assignment.

Write a paragraph explaining how you can personally as a Sabbath School teacher apply the concept of wisdom in your teaching. There is no grade for this activity, but be sure to note that you did it on your Scorecard.

Reading 4

Schools, Scribes and Sages

From: Chapter 4 in John Paterson, *The Book That Is Alive* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954).

Note: Read this carefully. It outlines the history of teaching in ancient Israel. Why is this important to a 21st century Sabbath school teacher? Because the principles outlined in the Scriptures are the same as those that apply today. The Sabbath school teacher is somewhat like the Sage discussed in this chapter. Overlook some of the dates the author suggests for various parts of the Bible. They are mostly erroneous, so ignore them.

Scribes and Teachers

It may not be denied, therefore, that there was need of Wisdom schools and Wisdom teachers. We need not be surprised at the emergence of such schools and teachers. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel are usually classified as seers or prophets but they were more: they were religious educators, and that probably of necessity. For teaching must accompany preaching if one would build up and edify a group. Those educators were only too familiar with the products of the contemporary schools and they felt the need of providing something better. Isaiah sets himself deliberately to create such a school as will give adequate expression to the prophetic ideals (Isaiah 8:16). Proverbs 25 represents a collection of sayings made by the "men of Hezekiah" and inasmuch as Hezekiah and Isaiah were on most friendly terms and sought common goals it may well be that we have here part of the prophet's religious instruction. Jeremiah seems to have had a circle of disciples of whom Baruch is best known, and it may be that the collection of Proverbs 22:17-24:22, made or copied in the days of Josiah, shows the influence of Jeremiah. In the Exile the Jews had ample leisure and Ezekiel was a willing teacher. In Babylon the Jewish Law was brought to its final form and a comprehensive manual for religious instruction was found therein. In addition much of the ancient wisdom was assembled and shaped into literary form and a complete manual of instruction for youth was at hand. Here morality and religion, etiquette and general deportment were all taught on a religious basis.

In one breath the sage will warn his pupil of unjust dealing before a partner or friend, of theft in the place where he sojourns, of falsifying an oath and a covenant, and of leaning on the table with his elbow when at meat? (W. A. L. Elmslie, *Studies in Life from Jewish Proverbs*, p. 163).

The production of career men was giving place to the ideal of character formation.

Thus Wisdom was at first purely utilitarian and developed in course of time into a quality which was ethical and religious, while it continued to be used in the original sense as well. Ultimately it came to be identical with the Law. (Oesterley & Robinson, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, 1934), p. 156.

It may be noted that though the earlier teaching of the Sages was mainly prudential morality it was not without a religious basis. That basis may have been only a thin veneer. The scribes in Egypt were under the special care of the god Thoth as their patron deity and in Babylon the patron deity was Nebo, the divine scribe. Ahikar, who occupied a position of

eminence in the government of Babylon, is referred to as "the wise and skillful scribe." (A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri* 1923), p. 220.

In the Old Testament the class of Wise Men (*Chakamim*) seems to reach back and connect with the early government scribe (*Sopher*) (2 Samuel 8:17, 20:25, 1 Kings 4:3, Jeremiah 36:20, 21). The town of Kirjath-sepher (booktown) is sometimes thought to have been a training center for scribes, but this is doubtful. The town seems to have been no more than a depot for the paper trade from Egypt as was Byblus in Phoenicia. That the scribe in Israel occupied a position similar to that of the scribes in Egypt and Babylon seems very probable. The fact that he occupied a high government position would constitute him a person of importance, a V. I. P. (Very important person). His position, substance, and experience would well qualify him to give counsel, and it was counsel men sought from the sages.

The earliest reference to the Wise Men is in Isaiah 29:14 and it is not favorable:

The wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

Again in Jeremiah we find the Wise Men associated with the priest and prophet as popular leaders:

The Law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. (Jeremiah 18:18).

In chapter 8:8 Jeremiah seems to identify scribe and sage:

How say ye, we are wise, and the Law of the Lord is with us? Behold the false pen of the scribes hath wrought falsely.

Ecclesiasticus (a Jewish scribe also called Ben Sira of Jerusalem who wrote the non-canonical book called Ecclesiasticus around 150 years before the time of Jesus) does not hesitate to apply both terms to himself although by his date the term scribe approaches more closely to the idea of one occupied with the letter and text of Scripture. That this idea came into vogue about the time of Ezra (400 b.c.) is a justifiable inference. At that date the sacred tongue, Hebrew, was becoming more and more unfamiliar to the common folk and interpreters were required to translate it into the popular Aramaic. It became the duty of the scribe to know the sacred text that he might expound it as "a ready scribe in the Law of Moses" (Ezra 7:6). Not only so, but he had to be familiar with the oral tradition that had developed: herein we observe the beginnings of the Talmud and the Rabbinate.

Oesterley thinks it must have been at a relatively early date, during the monarchy, that men from official circles concentrated on the study and collection of Wisdom material, "thus forming themselves into a distinct body, and becoming *Chakamim* (Sages, Wise Men) in the technical sense of sages." (W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Book of Proverbs*, 1929, p. 71). Not that we should think of this as the first attempt to create a Hebrew Academy. The growth may have been more gradual than Oesterley suggests. One could well imagine civil servants who had traveled abroad retiring to their homeland when their service was completed and willingly sharing their experience with those who sought to consult them. Such a person was well qualified to advise: he was experienced, mature, wise.

He serveth among great men,
And appeareth before a ruler:
He travelth in the land of foreign nations,
And hath experience of both good and evil among men. (Ecclesiasticus 39:4)

The minds of such men had been enlarged by their travels and their sympathies had been liberalized through foreign contacts. They knew the best and the worst and they had a sense of values. Who might better train young men? And they trained youth on a broad cultural basis.

The Wise Men represent the finest education of their period in combination with the pious spirit of their religion. It is an extraordinary feature of this Jewish scribism that it is not bound in national isolation and in narrow piety but that for its high leadership the most comprehensive viewpoint is not too wide. These Sages have thus shared fully in the international exchange.

This judgment applies to the period before Ezra but it must be modified for the later period.

Relation of sages to prophets and priests

We have already indicated that in the earlier period the Sages did not find favor with the Prophets. Their wisdom savored too much of this world: it was of the earth, very earthy. They were too cold and unimpassioned for those ecstatic bearers of the prophetic word. Nonetheless, they are one with the prophets in that they find the service of God not in ritual devotion but in moral action, and with the great prophets they share the international viewpoint. But we can understand the attitude of the prophets: *the Sages reflected on the ways of God but the prophets knew God in living experience.*

The relation of the Sages to the priests seems to have been of a more friendly nature. This is easily understood. Both sage and priest regarded man as standing in a rational relationship to God and both held the same ideas as to the moral government of the world. The thought of divine recompense belongs to both Deuteronomy and Proverbs. "Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament"—both priest and sage act on that belief. Ultimately priest and sage arrive at the same place for they both hold a static view of revelation. And so it was that Wisdom is finally identified with the Jewish Law (*Torah*).

Though priests, prophets, and wise men are grouped together in Jeremiah 18: 18 as leaders of the people, without any sign of precedence to any particular group, the succeeding period saw the Sages become the most prominent representatives of the people. The prophetic succession had largely ceased and to the wise men and scribes fell the task of interpreting the prophetic ideals. This they did in their quiet unobtrusive way, mingling with people in their homes and popular assemblies and winning for themselves a welcome which the more aloof prophets never knew. They carried their message into the homes of the people and buttonholed men on the street. They missed no opportunity. They "sat where they sat" and by the solvent of sympathy and mutual understanding they came closer to the common people and their needs than did their great inspired prophetic predecessors. It is no exaggeration when Ranston says:

It is customary, and with justification, to regard the prophets as the most illustrious exponents of the Hebrew religious spirit. But it may be doubted if the influence of these spiritual experts would have been so permanent and far-reaching apart from the work of the wise men in popularising their ideals and creating amongst the ordinary people a spirit sympathetic with them. (Ranston, *The Old Testament Wisdom Books and Their Teaching*, 1930), p. 19.

The Sages were the spiritual middlemen who mediated the exalted doctrines of the prophets and interpreted them in terms of common life and experience. They succeeded where the prophets failed: they reached the common people.

Moreover as a preparation for Christianity the work of the Sages is of great significance. Though they do not deal with the Messianic hope of Israel they revealed a broad universalism and liberality of thought that largely prepared the way for his coming. With them narrow bounds are transcended and the national is swallowed up in the international: Jew and Gentile are merged in the common idea of man. Here we have a *Praeparatio evangelica* of unique significance.

It is not obvious at first glance why the Sages should outstrip the priests in popular favor, but that they did so is beyond question. It is significant that in his Praise of Famous Men Ecclesiasticus should omit Ezra and commemorate Nehemiah. Equally significant is the

fact that the Wisdom Literature could develop as it did after Ezra's reformation and exaltation of the priesthood. It may be questioned whether the reforms of Ezra affected the life of the people as deeply as is suggested by the record. After all it must be borne in mind that it was the priestly group who gave us the Old Testament in its present form and history can be written with a distinct bias.

The Priests suffered from certain necessary limitations. They were bound to, and fettered by, an institution. They occupied a hereditary office. As exponents of the Law they exercised a certain lordship over the people. The Sage, on the other hand, was something of a "free-lance," unfettered by any institutional ideas and able to express his own individuality. The profession, too, was open to all and sundry. Moreover, as already indicated, the Sage was usually a man of experience and often possessed an ample competence. These factors could not fail to impress the common people. The Sage, too, was peripatetic: he got around and moved about as he pleased. He could button-hole men in the street and speak with groups wherever he might find them. The priest waited for folk to come to the church, but in the Sage the church sought the people. This was a popular movement. Another reason for their popularity may have been that they spoke of vital things in plain everyday speech. They recognized that such an approach would appeal to youth: young men are inclined to suspect pious talk. The Sages knew how to get their man; there was nothing formal in their approach.

The synagogue gave the Sages their opportunity. The life of these synagogue assemblies was warm and less formal than the stately temple services. In the temple ritual predominated, but in the synagogue the Word had a much larger place and anyone with a message might be asked to speak. There was a greater degree of liberty and in these assemblies the Sages were often found. There is, however, no trace of hostility or mutual jealousy between Priests and Sages but rather a spirit of co-operation. There was more affinity here than in the case of Sage and Prophet or Priest and Prophet.

In the post-exilic period the Sages occupy a pre-eminent place in the life of the nation. They were securely set in the affections of the people and they became the real leaders. They were not unconscious of their standing with the general public and they regarded their position with a high degree of pride. They seldom leave us, in doubt as to their sense of their own importance and although such a figure as Elihu (Job 32:2 if.) may seem almost comic to us he certainly did not so appear to his contemporaries. That same bombastic style may still be heard in the Arabian desert as may be seen from a modern example as given by Fulleylove and Kelman:

The elders sat silently leaning upon their staves except, now and then, when one of them would rise slowly and expatiate upon something the sheikh had said—perhaps about camels or the grain-crop—beginning his interruption almost literally in the words of Job's friends: Hearken unto me, I also will give my opinion. I will answer; also, for my part, I also will show my opinion. For I am full of matter, the spirit within constraineth me. (Fulleylove & Kelman, *The Holy Land*, pp. 105, 104).

We need not attribute an undue superiority complex to the Hebrew. His natural language is hyperbole. The Sages knew, and they knew that they knew.

The golden age of the profession dates from 400-160 B.C. That is the heyday of the scribe and the sage. At the top stands Ezra "a ready scribe in the Law of Moses which the Lord God of Israel had given" (Ezra 7:6). At the other end stands the illustrious Jeshua ben Sirach, or Ecclesiasticus, conspicuous for his piety, his breadth of view, his culture, and his faith. Between these two we perceive a development of great importance. The earlier Sages had been mainly from the upper strata of society and were well-to-do men whose thought had been liberalized by travel and wide experience. Later, however, the Jewish passion for education—which is matched only by that of the Scot—reached to the lower levels of the population and the ranks of the profession were invaded by poor wise men who did not scorn to work at a trade and ply their wisdom-teaching on the side. The earlier group of

Sages, understandably enough, had stood over against the working-classes as a distinct profession and often we can feel a touch of intellectual snobbery and sense the attitude that says, "I thank thee, Lord, that I am not as the butcher, the baker, and the candle-stick maker." This attitude can be observed in Ecclesiasticus though not in too pronounced degree:

The wisdom of the scribe cometh by opportunity of leisure,
And he that bath little business shall become wise.
How shall he become wise that guideth the plow,
That glorieth in the shaft of the goad,
That driveth oxen, and is busied with their labors,
And whose discourse is of the stock of bulls? (38:24, 25)

This may savor somewhat of the aristocratic Horace and his *Odi profanum vulgus et arceo* (I hate the common herd and repel them), or it may suggest the attitude of the cultured Greek towards the *hoi polloi* (the masses). At best there is a kindly tolerance perhaps mingled with a thinly veiled contempt. The later rabbis did not follow Ecclesiasticus in this way of thinking but they did esteem some trades better than others. Ass-drivers were looked upon as rather a low lot, presumably because the ass and the mule have the capacity to provoke variegated language of a profane type. Camel-drivers were rated higher, and sailors, then as now, were credited with considerable piety. The best of physicians was only fit for Gehenna while the butcher was a bloody-minded man, a son of Amalek. Tanners, weavers, and hairdressers enjoyed no high repute. It might be easy for the son of Sirach to adopt this attitude for he was born "with a silver spoon in his mouth," but most of the rabbis had to "work their way through college." And the Talmud urges work of this kind:

Whoso doth not teach his son to work teaches him to steal. (*Kiddushin* 99a).

About 90 A.D. we have the expressed judgment of Gamaliel:

An excellent thing is study of the Law combined with some worldly trade ... but all study of the Law apart from manual toil must fail at last, and be the cause of sin. (*Aboth* 2:1 f.).

Another puts it more forcibly:

Flay a carcass in the street and earn a living, and say not, I am a famous man, and such work is beneath my dignity. (*Pesachim*, 113a).

Paul is a standing type of the later Jewish rabbi and he learned his trade as a tentmaker.

Some of the best known rabbis of the Middle Ages supported themselves by laboring as carpenters, shoemakers, builders, bakers, and so forth. (W. A. L. Elmslie, *Studies in Life from Jewish Proverbs*, p. 119).

It is not difficult to trace the consequences of this development which began probably in the Greek period (after 333 B.C.). A less liberal group began to appear and there is a notable contraction of sympathy and interest. The wide opportunities of travel that were the lot of earlier Sages were not open to these "homekeeping wits." Simultaneously with the rise of Greek influence Israel was forced to act on the defensive and she withdrew more and more within herself. There is a distinct narrowing of intellectual interest. National exclusiveness was accentuated and the sectarian spirit grew apace. This can be observed most clearly in Ecclesiasticus where Wisdom is now equated with the Jewish Law and Wisdom is regarded as God's gift to Israel:

Let thy converse be with the man of understanding, and let all thy discourse be in the Law of the Most High. (9:15)

Zion became the abode of Wisdom and "salvation is of the Jews" (Ecclesiasticus 24: 10-12). Thus interest was narrowed and became centered on the letter to the exclusion of the spirit. The Talmud begins to take form and the unlovely form of the New Testament scribe begins to emerge before our eyes.

The teaching of the sages

It is not intended here to give the whole body of instruction offered by the Sages but rather to indicate its general outline. Before we proceed to set this forth let us consider the form and structure of the Book of Proverbs wherein is contained most of the teaching of the Sages.

The Book of Proverbs

The present writer can only think of this book with a large measure of affection for it has always been the favorite book of Scotsmen: probably no other book of the Bible has had a more lasting influence on the character of that people. John Ruskin loved that book above all others and we would venture to say that it had much to do with the foundation of the British Empire, for those early pioneers were men who had imbibed the teaching of this book from their earliest years. It entered into the fiber of character. . . .

Nature and content of the teaching [of the Book of Proverbs]

We now come to look at what the book contained and hear what the Sages had to say. This teaching is characterized by a breadth of human interest: these Hebrew Humanists count nothing alien to them. Their parish is the world.

Unto you, O men, I call,
And my voice is unto the sons of men. (Proverbs 8: 4)

This is as near as the Hebrew could come to the thought of what we call "humanity." Wisdom addresses man as man its appeal is not to Jew or Gentile but to Everyman. Thus it is at home in Edom (Jeremiah 49: 7) and in Egypt (Genesis 41: 8): it has its abode in Tyre (Ezekiel 28: 2) and it is no stranger in Babylon (Jeremiah 50: 35, 51: 57). Nor is Persia outside its range (Esther 1: 13, 6: 13). Wisdom is the true cosmopolitan and it is international in character. For this reason there is little or no mention of Jewish ritual, of Jerusalem, or of Messiah: all these are local or national concerns which Wisdom transcends. Humanity is the subject of study. These Humanists were of the opinion that "the proper study of mankind is man."

The teaching is marked by a healthy optimism and even expressed in terms of worldliness. They are more interested in feasting than in fasting. There is little of what we call other-worldliness here. Even Ecclesiastes, for all his gloom, cannot suppress the prevailing mood: even with "the gloomy dean" cheerfulness is always breaking forth.

Go, eat in Cheerfulness thy daily Food, and drink thy Wine as an
Immortal should, be well content, while yet thou canst enjoy, that God is
pleased to let thee still see Good.

Put off thy Mourning, give the rein to Mirth, cherish thy wife while yet
thou art on Earth, while yet the Bubble lasts under the Sun—this is what God
has judged thy Toil is worth. (Ecclesiastes 9: 7-9).

There is throughout a sheer *joie de vivre* which even the gloomy *Qoheleth* (Preacher in Ecclesiastes) cannot hide. Proverbs, too, knows it well:

The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart,
and good tidings maketh the bones fat. (Proverbs 15: 30)

Robert Browning knows it well as he writes in Saul:

How good is man's life, the mere living! how fit to employ all the heart and the soul and the senses forever in joy.

The Hebrew looked on the bright side of things: he was an incorrigible optimist:

The glory of young men is their strength,
and the beauty of old men is the hoary head. (Proverbs 20:29).

Man was created for the good—and the goods!

Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty.
Open thine eyes and thou shalt have bread aplenty. (Proverbs 20:13)

Earthly possessions have value and they are worthy of a man's main effort:

In all labor there is profit,
but mere talk leadeth to poverty. (Proverbs 14:23).

Life, moreover, is beset with pitfalls, but a man does not need to be a fool:

My son, if sinners entice thee,
consent thou not. (Proverbs 1:10).
Eat thou not the bread of him that bath an evil eye, neither desire thou
his dainties. (Proverbs 23:6).

"God's in his heaven"—though that is not overemphasized —"all's right with the world."
(Browning)

The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich,
and he addeth no sorrow with it. (Proverbs 10:22).

Verily it shall be well with the righteous, and to be righteous is to be wise:

The fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom: wisdom and discipline
fools despise. (Proverbs 1:7).

There is no thought of future judgment or of the kingdom of God but the world is moral at bottom and man will not fail of his due reward:

He who gives heed to the word will prosper,
and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he. (Proverbs 16:20)

The Sages, of course, do not shoot at the moon. They are marked by moderation. They do not look for supermen, but if they can subtract from the number of fools and add to the number of the wise they will not have labored in vain. Their aim is one possible of attainment. No heroic ideals are here, only sanctified common-sense, moderation, temperance, self-control. These find response from men as the loftier and more inaccessible ideas and ideals of the prophets never did. Cautions against over-sleeping, over-eating, over-drinking abound in this teaching. Immoderate anger and hasty speech are alike condemned:

He that guardeth his mouth keepeth his life,
but he that openeth wide his lips shall be destroyed. (Proverbs 13:3)

"Shut mouths catch no flies," say the Scots, and the Sages felt that way also. The wise man will not give way to passion:

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty,

and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. (Proverbs 18:32)

This is certainly a far remove from the prophetic spirit. The seers of Israel were active and energetic but with the Sages the passive virtues are more in demand. Social passion is conspicuous by its absence. In this respect the Wisdom Literature stands lower than Deuteronomy and is very far removed from the New Testament. The "policy of the good neighbor" is not here. After all, the wise man will mind his own business. Nobody needs to be a fool, and a meddler will get little for his pains:

He seizeth a dog by the ears
who meddles with a quarrel not his own. (Proverbs 26:17)

Thus the negative side of things gets greater emphasis than the positive:

To depart from evil, that is wisdom. (Job 28:28).

The appeal to self-interest is prominent and the motives here are self-regarding. Probably the Semite could not help that, for thousands of years in the desert necessarily made him so: the desert was cruel and men had to develop a strong self-regarding instinct to survive. But the Old Testament reveals a higher level than is found elsewhere and there is an advancing sentiment in the Wisdom Literature. "The good name that is better than precious ointment," the applause and approval of one's fellowmen are highly prized:

The crucible is for silver, the furnace for gold,
and a man is to be estimated according to his reputation. (Proverbs
27:21)

The consciousness of personal integrity takes high rank among the goods of life:

Better is little with righteousness
than great revenues with injustice. (Proverbs 16:8).

The thought of moral responsibility begins to find expression and the sense of social obligation comes into view:

For from a man of understanding shall a city be peopled, but by a race of
wicked men it shall be desolate. (Ecclesiasticus 16:4)

There is no conception of absolute moral law: the central interest is egotistic and negative:

Do no evil, so shall no evil overtake thee:
Depart from wrong, and it shall turn away from thee. (Ecclesiasticus 7:1)

Men had to wait until Jesus Christ came with the emancipating word, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matthew 7:12). The fulness of time was not yet come. The ideal of the Sages is that a man should mind his own business and not interfere with other folks' affairs. It is frankly self-regarding and eudemonistic.

All this means, in large measure, an absence of idealism. Nothing could be further removed from the prophetic attitude. Nevertheless, the Book of Proverbs would never have found such a place in the life of men, particularly Scotsmen, unless it possessed elements of real value. The Sages were practical, realists: the prophets were visionaries, idealists. Where the prophets called the people could seldom follow but the Wise men entered into the common life of common folk and imbued that life with uncommon moral earnestness, integrity, and truth. They made the prophetic ideals real and that is no mean service. Their close connection with human beings and their human concerns achieved more than the comparative aloofness of the prophets who stood in the "council of the Almighty." Without

the Sages the prophetic ideals would not have found lodgment in the popular mind. The solvent of the Sages' sympathy wrought most wonderfully.

What is wisdom?

Perhaps we may look back here for a moment and see what we have garnered. Wisdom in the eyes of the Sages was both the fundamental principle of the universe and the guide of human life. This was a feature common to Wisdom Literature generally. Laotse's philosophy of the universe and his doctrinal instruction center around Tao, a supernatural form of universal significance which possesses absolute truth, being, and goodness. The true man is he who is complete in Wisdom. Likewise in Greece the wise man is the ideal both in the time of Solon and in the later period. Wisdom is exalted to a position of distinction that can be understood only as we recall that originally she was a deity-Ea in Babylon, Athena in Greece, and later Isis in the EgyptoHellenic world. Something of this mythology may appear in the Old Testament, particularly in Proverbs, chapter 7, where, according to Rankin, we have Iranian influence. (S. Rankin, *Israel's Wisdom Literature*, 1936), pp. 223-264). But monotheism spells death to all such mythology and such an idea could not survive in Judaism. The conception was anathema to Ecclesiasticus and it is not found outside the latest section of the Book of Proverbs (1-9). The Sages saw Wisdom in Creation and Providence: it is the underlying principle of the universe as it is of human life. To have Wisdom and to walk by it is to be in harmony with the Creator.

It signifies the building of life on the principle that informs and sustains the universe.

The Hebrew could not advance beyond that point. The speculative instinct that would naturally issue in philosophy is not found here—with the partial exception of Ecclesiastes - though it found free course in India and the Greek world. The Hebrew was practical and conduct was his main interest— right conduct, piety. He believed in walk rather than talk. Thus he came straight to the position that Wisdom is morality and religion: "The fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom." That verse occurs again and again, and "the fear of the Lord" is just a Hebrew synonym for religion. This wisdom has been revealed in their history, and the record is plain for all to see and read—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings. Doubtless, as we have observed in the foregoing pages, there was danger of narrowness and limitation which, though not at first apparent, became clear in the later Sages and emerges into fuller light in the pages of the New Testament

UNIT 3

The Sabbath School Teacher/Discussion Leader and Spiritual Gifts

The question is often asked whether a teacher/discussion leader is “made” or “born.” Most teacher/discussion leaders are “made;” they learn the craft through study and experience. Some people, however, inherit the ability to teach, and they improve this talent through study and experience. There is also a third alternative, and in Christian teaching this is often the most significant: the spiritual gift of teaching assigned by the Holy Spirit.

The Seventh-day Adventist church officially recognizes the validity and role of spiritual gifts within the church. Fundamental Belief No. 17 states: “God bestows upon all members of His church in every age spiritual gifts which each member is to employ in loving ministry for the common good of the church and of humanity. Given by the agency of the Holy Spirit, who apportions to each member as He wills, the gifts provide all abilities and ministries needed by the church to fulfill its divinely ordained functions. According to the Scriptures, these gifts include such ministries as faith, healing, prophecy, proclamation, teaching, administration, reconciliation, compassion, and self-sacrificing service and charity for the help and encouragement of people. Some members are called of God and endowed by the Spirit for functions recognized by the church in pastoral, evangelistic, apostolic, and teaching ministries particularly needed to equip the members for service, to build up the church to spiritual maturity, and to foster unity of the faith and knowledge of God. When members employ these spiritual gifts as faithful stewards of God's varied grace, the church is protected from the destructive influence of false doctrine, grows with a growth that is from God, and is built up in faith and love.”¹⁴

What Is a Spiritual Gift?

Spiritual gifts are special attributes given by the Holy Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ according to God's grace for use within the context of the Body. All born again Christians are assigned spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit, whether they realize it or not. Spiritual gifts are not always the same as natural talents. A natural talent is an inheritance from parents and ancestors. Spiritual gifts are assigned by the Holy Spirit. They might match up and they might not—it all depends on the ministry the Holy Spirit wishes to assign to a born-again Christian.

Spiritual gifts are assignments to lifelong ministry. Ellen White's statement, “The Lord calls for young men and women to gird themselves for lifelong, earnest labor in the Sabbath school work,”¹⁵ is a description of a spiritual gift as a lifelong ministry. In this case, through study and experience, the teacher/discussion leader becomes a Master Teacher/discussion leader, well-trained and skillful.

This does not necessarily mean “highly educated” in a formal educational sense. Well-trained and skillful Sabbath School teacher/discussion leaders may study and develop superlative knowledge and skills on their own, or in training courses like the one you have in hand. Sabbath School teaching is a *spiritual* activity. As long as a person has the personality and dedication for this ministry, he or she will be a good Sabbath School teacher/discussion leader.

In spite of this, however, the ideal is always to look for people who have the spiritual gift of teaching. Such are drawn to this ministry and feel a real call. They are self-motivated to teaching in Sabbath School.

¹⁴<<http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental/index.html>>.

¹⁵*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 13

The Difference Between Spiritual Gifts and Roles in Church Service

A role of service in the church is a temporary assignment based on church needs. Spiritual gifts are assignments to lifelong ministry. In the Introduction to this class, the statement was made: If a member accepts a teaching position because of the "call of duty," (often because no one else will accept), it is doubtful that much will happen in either the minds or souls of class members. This is true, but the same person who answered the call of duty may well discover that the Lord has indeed given them the spiritual gift of teaching and develop into a good Sabbath School teacher/discussion leader.

The spiritual gift of teaching is the special ability that God gives to some members of the Body of Christ to communicate information relevant to the spiritual health and ministry of the Body and its members in such a way that others will learn.

Spiritual Gifts and Church Authority

If I am called by the Holy Spirit to teach a Sabbath School class, do I still have to listen to the people on the Sabbath School Council or anyone else in the church? The authority that comes with a spiritual gift is *the authority to do the work of the kingdom*. This is a matter of responsibility, not personal self-serving authority. Jesus "spoke as one having authority" (Matt. 7:29, NKJV) but He did not "rule" anything, nor did He mistreat anyone just to show His authority. Our authority is derived from the authority of the Holy Spirit and delegated to us to be used in the service of the Kingdom. That is why it is known as *spiritual* authority and not command authority.

The Gift of Discernment

The spiritual gift of discernment often accompanies that of teaching. This is part of the issue of wisdom. The gift of discernment is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to know with assurance whether certain behavior purported to be of God is in reality divine, human, or satanic.

The Gift of Shepherding

The gift of shepherding is similar to that of pastoring. The gift of pastor is the special ability that God gives to certain members of the Body of Christ to assume a long-term personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers. In the case of the Sabbath School teacher/discussion leader the "group of believers" are the members of the class.

In his book on spiritual gifts, Bobby Clinton sums up well the gift of teaching: "The gift of teaching ranks high among the leadership gifts. God uses this gift primarily to bring about maturity growth in the body.

"Because a teacher/discussion leader has such an influence over many others there must be constant searching of the Scriptures to insure that what is being taught is truth. A teacher/discussion leader should be quick to modify views whenever they are inconsistent with the teacher/discussion leader's ever-increasing grasp of Scripture.

"James 3:1 warns that teacher/discussion leaders will receive greater judgment; people should carefully exercise this gift. Second Peter (and probably Jude) strongly warns against the influence of false teacher/discussion leaders. Any teacher/discussion leader can be a false teacher/discussion leader in some given area of teaching. We must be careful to heed this warning.

"Even though there are dangers that accompany teaching there are great rewards. It is a tremendous thing to realize that God has shown you truth and you can pass it on so that others have their lives changed by it. The satisfaction of seeing God's truth change lives is certainly reward enough for one exercising this gift."

Assignment 5

- *Be sure to record on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have filled in the Inventory.*

Complete the Inventory in Assignment 5. This is not a test and has no score. None of the statements are right or wrong. Just mark that number that seems to fit you the best. It is for you to decide where you fit into the pattern of spiritual giftedness and Sabbath School teaching.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS INVENTORY¹⁶

A Teaching and Shepherding Gifts Inventory

	<u>False</u>				<u>True</u>
1. I feel very much at home leading out in any Bible teaching setting.	1	2	3	4	5
2. It does, or I believe it would, bring great satisfaction to lead the same group each week of the year.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I can prepare a logical class outline for a Bible lesson study.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I see myself as a "shepherd" in the church with a total dedication to the welfare of my class.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Bible teachings come quickly to mind when I deal with a problem.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I'm excited about visiting church members in their homes on a regular basis.	1	2	3	4	5

Add up your total score for questions 1, 3 and 5: _____ Teaching

Add up your total score for questions 2, 4 and 6 _____ Shepherding

If your score is ten or higher for either spiritual gift, it is probable that the Holy Spirit has bestowed this gift in your life, and it is important that you explore the possibility of using it in ministry in your local church/district.

¹⁶Source: Roy C. Naden and Robert J. Cruise, *The Spiritual Gifts Inventory*.

Assignment 6

Statement of Mission

- *Be sure to record on your Student Fulfillment Card that you have completed this assignment.*

In one or two brief statements, write a personal statement of mission and a description of how you will personally apply that statement of mission to adult Sabbath School teaching. Keep this statement of mission with your Sabbath School Bible Study Guide and refer to it periodically to see how you are doing.

A statement of mission may be build around phrases such as "As an adult Sabbath School teacher I will (pray consistently, etc.), and with the help of the Lord instill in my class members . . ."

This is just an illustration. Make your statement of mission as personal as you wish.

Small Group Activity

If you are studying in a group, have the group members share their statements of mission as they feel at ease in doing so.

Course Summary

This course has focused on the spiritual aspect of Sabbath School teaching, the “being” aspect of the Sabbath School teaching core values of being, knowing, and doing. We have looked at: (1) What the Bible says about wisdom, sphere of influence, personal spiritual growth and attitude, and how this applies to Sabbath School teaching, and (2) a comprehension of the degree to which the Lord has endowed you with the spiritual gifts of teaching and shepherding.

A personal statement of mission has grown out of this study. That statement will guide your future Sabbath School teaching. May the Lord bless you as you continue in this all-important ministry of Sabbath School teaching.

The High Calling of the Sabbath School Teacher

Name: _____

Church/District _____

This Fulfillment Card is the record that you have successfully completed the core class *The High Calling of the Sabbath School Teacher* of the North American Division Adult Ministries Department Sabbath School Teacher training curriculum. When all the items are

Student Fulfillment Card

The High Calling of the Sabbath School Teacher

Name: _____

Church/District _____

This Fulfillment Card is the record that you have successfully completed the core class *The High Calling of the Sabbath School Teacher* of the North American Division Adult Ministries Department Sabbath School Teacher training curriculum. When all the items are completed, have the Fulfillment Card signed by the appropriate person (your class instructor, your Internet instructor, a Sabbath School superintendent, person in charge of Sabbath School teachers in your church/district, your pastor or someone from the conference in charge of Sabbath School teacher training).

Check the items completed

- I have read the assigned sections of Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*.
- I have read the three Units of the Study Guide.
- I have read the following:
 - Reading 1: "The Teacher's Personality"
 - Reading 2: "The Most Effective Teaching"
 - Reading 3: "The Christian Teacher"
 - Reading 4: "Schools, Scribes and Sages"
- I have done Assignment 1: Summarizing Some Concepts.
- I have filled in and graded Assignment 2. My score was ____/20.
- I have completed Assignment 3: Your Strong and Weak Points.
- I have completed Assignment 4: Applying the Concept of Wisdom.
- I have completed Assignment 5: Spiritual Gifts Inventory.
- I have completed Assignment 6: My Statement of Mission.

_____ has satisfactorily completed the course
The High Calling of the Sabbath School Teacher.

(Signature) _____

Date _____

Position _____

Please submit at www.nadadultministries.org