

THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER

by

Clarence H. Benson, Litt. D

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CHAPTER SEVEN

Aids

AN "AID" is all that the word implies. It is not an end in itself, nor is it a crutch upon which the teacher may depend. It is a means of assistance for improving instruction. Good teaching employs the method of showing, not as a device merely to get attention and form a point of contact, but to help pupils form mental pictures, for clearer understanding.

These aids should be employed while the pupils read, discuss, are questioned, and are giving expression to their instruction. When a teacher can make use of visual aids while talking, the mind can grasp the story more clearly and remember it more permanently. In other words, eye-gate combines with ear-gate to create the impression.

I. AIDS FOR IMPRESSION

Since it is the primary purpose of the teacher to reach the mentality, there should first be a consideration of such aids as will deepen and render more permanent the impressions.

1. Teacher's manual.

At the top of all aids we must put the teacher's manual; not that it is necessarily first in importance, but because it is so largely used. The manual is the teacher's expert helper (. P. Berkeley, *You Can Teach*, p. 49. 92).

It is the guide and counselor of the specialist. The average teacher can get a great deal of help from one who is a Bible student and who has obtained a mastery of his textbook through a prescribed course of training. But this expert counselor will also be familiar with the psychological and pedagogical laws covering the teaching of the Bible.

The ordinary Sunday school teacher does not have the time to take a training course that would make him, or her, as efficient as a public school teacher. More experienced persons, therefore, put the results of their labors upon the printed page. But no teacher must ever permit the manual to become a crutch, or let it come between him and his pupils. After all, it is essential to remember we are not teaching the contents of manuals. We are teaching pupils. The teaching process requires human relationships. In this connection the teacher's manual can be made an invaluable aid, when the teacher makes it a point to:

a. Use it with the Bible.

It is most unfortunate when the teacher's manual is used as a substitute for the Bible. If, in preparing the lesson, the teacher will always make it a point to read carefully from his Bible the lesson text and the Scripture relating to it before taking up his quarterly, the task will be approached in the proper order. There is very little real Bible teaching today, because the teachers are satisfied to limit their instruction to the contents of their manual.

In a course like the *All-Bible Graded Series*, there is more Bible in the lesson helps than many teachers realize. This provision of additional Bible material is not intended to lengthen the prescribed lesson, but to give the teacher a better background from which to understand and explain the lesson.

b. Use it for the pupil.

Attention has been called to the fact that we are teaching the pupil and not the contents of a manual. In other words, we need to be reminded of that fundamental - teaching the Bible to John or Mary. Ministering to the souls of pupils means serving them at the point of their deepest needs, in the life they are actually living. When a manual is consulted with a view to discovering how best to impart the biblical content, in the light of the characteristics and needs of the pupil, it will help the teacher to a more intelligent understanding of his pupils. The teacher's work is conditioned by the pupils' interests, and he succeeds only insofar as he is able rightly to relate the contents of the manual to the pupils' desires and comprehension.

c. Use it out of class.

The properly prepared teacher will make little use of a manual during a class period. In fact, it would be better if he would leave it at home, and depend entirely upon his Bible. This will not only constantly remind the pupils of the inspired Source of the teacher's instruction, but will give them a new appreciation of the Bible's contents. While it is important that the manual should never come between the teacher and the pupils, it is even more important that it should not stand between the pupils and the Bible. Then the attention is upon the Bible - the real textbook - and not upon any material compiled even by an experienced writer.

2. Objects.

Language is the great tool of the teacher. Human communication is largely through the spoken and written word. Language has its limitations. Words that are not familiar, and sentences that are not comprehensible, are useless. Pupils may fail to grasp a truth through the ear-gate, but they will be far more successful in comprehending what is taught through the eye-gate. Teachers who have made a practice of using visual aids, have no doubt as to their value, but what is needed is a new appreciation of their use, and a wider acquaintance with what aids are available. Teachers who use visual aids have noticed the increased interest of their pupils. They have observed how much more quickly attention can be gained, the more enthusiastic response that is given. As one has expressed it, "They never look puzzled when you show them pictures.

Objects appeal to all ages. Small objects, linked definitely the lesson, may be used at any time. A scroll, for instance, will help the pupils to understand how the Old Testament was originally written. Dr. Reu tells of one teacher who brought into his class a homemade model of stocks (Acts 16:24), to picture more vividly and impressively the painful torture of Paul and Silas in prison. Another teacher, while telling the story of Mary anointing our Lord in Bethany (John 12:1-8), took a bottle of perfume and poured some on her handkerchief, then waved it round about until the room was filled with the odor. This story will not be forgotten easily by her pupils. A third teacher, while discussing Hebrews 4:12, showed a double-edged dagger to a class of restless boys. Instantly they became attentive, and certainly received an unforgettable picture of the penetrating power of the Bible (Reu, *How to Teach in the Sunday School*, p. 75).

So we see that a most valuable and effective means of illustration is employed when the teacher, instead of using descriptive words, actually gives the pupil firsthand experience with the thing that is being discussed. A well-equipped Sunday school will be provided with as good a collection as possible of Bible and missionary models and curios.

3. Maps and pictures.

Maps are a necessity, especially for pupils who are studying geography in public school, to help them become familiar with the topography, as well as the locations of countries and cities named in the Bible. Maps should be frequently consulted, and those which can be rolled up when not in use are preferable, as they not only take the smallest amount of space but also last longer.

Every teacher should have access to a globe, as it will be valuable not only in locating mission fields, but also in comparing the size and location of Bible lands with the pupils' own country.

The use of pictures is so common and time-honored that there is scarcely a teacher, especially of children, who does not employ them. However, it is necessary that the lesson be carefully planned around the pictures, so that the latter do not become the end of the instruction.

The Christian teacher will be on the lookout for good pictures, collecting them from various sources. The life of Christ can be studied by means of a series of masterpieces. Telling the story in combination with using the pictures helps pupils form clearer conceptions. A class which is able by means of a dozen good pictures to give a running narrative of the life of Christ, from His birth to the resurrection, will have the facts more definitely fixed in mind than if limited to one whose instruction has been merely hearing the story. On the other hand, when too much attention is given to a picture, or it contains too many details, it is more likely to be remembered than the lesson.

4. The blackboard.

While blackboards are being widely used by departmental superintendents, too few teachers have recognized their advantages. Where there is sufficient blackboard space in a classroom, the board can be used alike by teacher and pupils. The action itself on the part of the teacher in making use of a blackboard helps to sustain attention.

Its greater usefulness, however, is to clarify the instruction by means of diagrams and outlines, and even drawings. Care must be taken to avoid details. If the diagram or outline is built up step by step, as the information is imparted, the pupils will enjoy a splendid advantage.

A teacher need not be an artist to use a blackboard effectively. On such a board, a dozen vertical lines will represent the twelve spies going out to investigate the Promised Land. Ten horizontal lines and two vertical lines will represent the return of these men, with the unfavorable report of the majority. New and difficult words, important dates, can be written down. Also, points can be jotted down in an outline or summary of the instruction.

5. Flannelgraph.

No modern teaching aid is as versatile as the flannel graph, and more and more teachers are employing it. A few Christian workers introduced the use of the flannelgraph visual aids about two decades ago, and it is now widely used in the Sunday school, Daily Vacation Bible School, and in Child Evangelism meetings.

The flannelgraph is a simple device enabling the teacher to build a scene or a diagram before the eyes of the class by merely placing cutout pictures against the surface of the board. The figures adhere to the board because they are backed with flannel. For ordinary use, no special lighting is required, and the equipment may be used indoors or out-of-doors. The materials and equipment are easily transported from place to place in a relatively small, compact parcel. The cost can be kept at a minimum because the equipment can be improvised, or made even by an amateur. More elaborate equipment and exquisitely designed materials are available at reasonable, higher cost.

The use of the flannelgraph is not confined to this country. Missionaries in far-off fields of the world, enthusiastically welcome this aid in their unique teaching problems. The problem of communicating is quickly solved through this medium of reaching the eye-gate.

The flannelgraph secures the attention at the very outset, and if the story is kept moving and new factors appear often, it effectively sustains the interest. If the class is taught to repeat the story at the end of the lesson, the pupils in placing the figures upon the board will combine not only the faculties of hearing and seeing, but also of seeing and doing.

Frank G. Coleman, in *The Romance of Winning Children*, says there are three fundamentals the teacher must master if the flannelgraph is to serve its full purpose:

a. The principle of dexterity.

Unskillful fumbling as you manipulate the figures of your flannelgraph lesson is distracting. It calls attention away from your lesson to your own lack of skill. The teacher should practice. The teacher should not only know his story well but also practice telling it with the use of the flannelgraph figures, until he is thoroughly familiar with it. Then everything should be in readiness for your class session. and the figures arranged on an adjoining table, in the order in which they are to be used, so that the hands can be kept as free as possible.

Keep the story moving. Talk while you work, and do not turn away entirely from the class while using the board.

b. Suspense.

Curiosity, which we have already noted is an important factor in gaining attention, is aroused by the way the figures are placed on the board. If the back is held up before the class, they will be curious to know what is on the other side. Nor is this curiosity satisfied until the last word has been spoken, and the teacher is ready to place it on the board. Never place any of the materials on the board before you begin to speak. Develop the scene as you tell the story; and then delay that development to the last possible moment.

c. Movement.

Attention has already been called to the fact that the use the blackboard brings the teacher into action. If he walks about, as he tells the story with the flannelgraph, his movement will be equally helpful in sustaining attention. Every motion or gesture occupies the eye, and even though many may be seemingly unnecessary, they will put life into the instruction (Frank G. Coleman, *The Romance of Winning Children*, p. 146).

6. Projector

The projector is also a modern aid. While David Livingstone, in his African journeys, used a magic lantern to gain the interest and friendship of the natives, the modern projector is being used advantageously for the same purpose in enlightened countries. The stereopticon, which the American lecturer once used to illustrate his address, had a slide of glass which measured 3 1/4 inches by 4 inches. In Britain the glass slides were square. But in recent years, a new type of miniature slide, available in film transparencies and measuring two inches by two inches, is commonly used.

The popularity of these miniature slides is due to several factors. The projector required is more easily carried and less expensive. The slides are not easily broken and their weight is but a fraction of that of the old glass transparencies.

The development of the 35 mm. high-speed miniature camera has made it possible to produce homemade slides at a small expense. Perhaps the most important contribution to the teacher's work has been the Kodachrome film which has made it possible to reproduce scenes and pictures in full color on slides, at a fraction of the cost of hand-coloring the old glass transparencies.

In recent years educators have made careful experiments in the use of the projector as an advance means of instruction. The results from these experiments have disappointed some of the early enthusiasts who supposed that much of our instruction would be done from the screen. On the other hand, they have constantly shown that teaching with the use of projectors is superior to teaching without them.

For the Sunday school teacher, it is doubtful that a projector can ever be regarded as more than a supplementary means of instruction. Much information must accompany the picture to make it practical and helpful. Perhaps the best use, especially of the moving picture, will be reviews of a series of lessons.

II. AIDS FOR EXPRESSION

A real distinction needs to be made between aids for impression and aids for expression. We have but to recall the need for the teacher's reaching the personality in order to understand the place of aids for expression.

1. Importance.

Visual aids, after all, are helps for reaching the mentality.

But even if the pupil is better informed and is able to retain his information, the visual aids have not necessarily secured a response. Expression aids are important for

a. Deepening the impression.

Someone has said, "A little child will probably forget what he hears; he may forget what he has seen; he will not forget what he has done."

If this is true, it follows that we must think of learning not as a process limited to listening and looking, but also of doing. Aids for expression furnish opportunity for doing on the part of the pupils. As the pupil expresses these ideas, he re-impresses them upon his own mind, and he gets them now through a different sense channel - not only through eye and ear, but also through the hand. Whatever may be the kind of learning, there is one law which stands out as the first law of learning anything - pupils *learn by doing*.

Learning begins and continues in what the learner does. The pupil taking a piano lesson may get certain impressions from what he hears and sees when the teacher demonstrates a musical selection, but he doesn't really begin to learn until he practices the piece himself. Until practice begins there can be no real learning.

b. Capitalizing on energy.

Pupils like to do things. It has been known that among the best solutions for problems of discipline is keeping the active pupil occupied. He has boundless energy which needs to be utilized. It is far better for the teacher to use this natural disposition to activity rather than to have to work against it. Nothing is more typical of childhood, or more trying sometimes, than the boundless energy and ceaseless activity of boys and girls. The wise teacher uses this activity and energy, directs it, controls it, instead of trying to suppress it. Rightly directed expressional activity can serve an excellent educational purpose. Attempts to suppress it may bring disastrous results.

c. Reaching the personality.

In a former chapter we have seen that we have not successfully contacted the personality until there has been the appropriation and application of knowledge. This is not in the realm of the teacher's instruction, but in the response that is obtained from the pupil. The teacher himself is probably the best visual aid that can ever be placed before a pupil. His class constantly sees before them the life ideal to which they may attain.

An unconscious imitation of a noble character may be the appropriation of something more valuable even than the instruction imparted. In reaching the personality through expressional aids, we are doing far more than providing "busy" work for restless pupils. The activities are to have a positive value in shaping a life.

Our aim is the development of Christian character and training in Christian living.

2. Pupil's manual.

Far more important than any visual aid for impression is the pupil's manual. Next to the teacher's quarterly is this work-book for the pupil. It represents his best response to the instruction. Of course the pupil's manual is a means and not an end. If the teacher is more concerned that his class should be able to show a neat and orderly manual than that they should have the training that comes from doing the work in this manual, he is defeating the ultimate purpose of the activity. No lesson series is complete without these pupil's manuals. In fact, they are even more important than the teacher's manual, and a good lesson writer will generally prepare the pupil's manual first. It is preferable that the work in the pupil's manual be done at home, for then the teacher has a foundation of knowledge to which he can contribute additional instruction.

The chief mistake made by teachers is the lack of attention given to these all-important manuals. Often the books are carelessly given out, with a formal suggestion or request that they be studied at home, in preparation of the lesson for the following Sunday. But unless there is co-operation in the home, the chances are there will be no preparation, and the books will be forgotten or lost. Under these circumstances, it is best to use at least a part of the class period for supervised study.

If there is any written work provided in the book it can be cared for at this time. Many good teachers follow this method of using the pupil's manual, and get splendid results. Above all, they have learned the pedagogical principle that teaching is getting a response, and that it is more important for the pupil to prepare the notebook than for the teacher to spend, the class period in talking.

In every pupil's manual there should be

a. Something to write.

There may be blanks to fill in, sentences to complete. The act of writing is not only the pupil's recording of knowledge, but can also be a personal response to that instruction.

b. Something to find.

When a pupil is required to search the archives of knowledge for an answer, he is more likely to remember the results of his work, and his activity will also make an impression upon his personality, developing his initiative for the discovery of truth.

c. Something to draw.

The pupil may see a map, and so be helped to a better understanding of the lesson, but he will gain his best impression by drawing it. Blackboard work is equal in value to filling blank pages in a pupil's manual. In drawing a map, it is not necessary that an artistic sketch be provided. The right hand boundary for a map of Palestine is the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea, with the Jordan River connecting. With this are a half dozen important cities - names to be printed in large distinct letters. When the pupils have learned to locate on their maps, Palestine, Capernaum, Nazareth, Jericho, Bethlehem, and Bethany (located north to south in a straight line) they have the geographical essentials for the life of Christ. To this knowledge other items can readily be added.

3. Constructions.

Marion Lawrence first called the attention of Sunday school teachers to the fact that a child remembers 10 per cent of what he hears, 50 per cent of what he sees, 70 per cent of what he says, and 90 per cent of what he does. What he writes and finds and draws will make a more indelible impression upon his mind than what he sees, but in all probability he will best remember what he constructs.

It was the advent of the Daily Vacation Bible School that first attracted the attention of educators to the importance of manual arts in religious instruction. The Sunday school hour was too brief for the time required. A few teachers were familiar with the success of this means of instruction in the public schools. Only a few Bible institutes were offering courses in manual arts. Moreover, there was a prejudice against having the pupil waste his time in this field. At best, many religious leaders thought that manual expression served no higher purpose than providing "busy" work. The success of manual arts in the public school led to its adoption in the Daily Vacation Bible School. It was seen that pupils were not wasting time when their constructions were closely correlated to instruction. Handwork served a very practical purpose. The fact was soon discovered that in their love for doing things, pupils were more anxious to attend the three hours of vacation school than the one hour of Sunday school. Further, the Scripture Press found it necessary, in connection with their own Vacation Bible School lessons, to supply some pre-session activities for boys and girls who insisted on coming to school before the opening hour.

Even a three-hour session was none too long for their period of learning.

a. Materials.

There are many inexpensive materials available for construction purposes.

Paper and pasteboard lend themselves to the making of many projects. The Bible village, or a house representing each book, can be constructed entirely of paper. The girls can work with cloth, and the boys with wood, to good advantage. These materials are inexpensive and call for a small outlay of money.

b. Projects.

A boy will learn more about the Tabernacle from constructing a model, than by reading the directions in Exodus a hundred times. The construction of a relief map of Palestine will give him a better conception of the mountains and valleys than any amount of reading about them, or even special instruction in Bible geography. A resourceful teacher will discover innumerable projects that can be related to a Bible lesson. One has only to scan the pages of the pupil's manual of the All Bible Vacation School Series to gain an impression of the possibilities for providing these activities for the pupils. Finally, aids for expression must go further than the development of the personality. This is important. But for the Christian teacher there is a higher objective. He must reach the spiritual life of his pupils. Without discounting in the least the value of activity in the classroom as a means of making impressions more vivid, more permanent, and more vital, and appealing to the personality for choice and decision, the Christian teacher must aim for the development of Christian character and training in Christian living. Character and ability to live the Christian life will come only through practice - practice in Christian living. For this reason, in a subsequent chapter, considerable attention will be given to making application of instruction to the spiritual life of the pupil.

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by an aid?
2. Name five aids for the impression of truth.
3. What is the teacher's manual, and in what three ways should it be used?
4. Why are objects helpful in teaching?
5. Discuss the value of maps and pictures.
6. What use can be made of the blackboard?
7. What are Mr. Coleman's three fundamentals for the use of the flannelgraph?
8. Why is the projector only a supplementary means of instruction?
9. Give three reasons why aids for expression are important.
10. Why is the pupil's manual of such great importance?
11. How can the pupil's manual be used for supervised study?
12. What three lines of activity should be subscribed in the pupil's manual?
13. Discuss briefly the value of manual arts.
14. Suggest several biblical projects that lend themselves to constructive activity.

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