



The General Conference
Sabbath School &
Personal Ministries



TO

SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHING

SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CHURCH 

Counsels on Sabbath School Teaching is created by the General Conference Sabbath School & Personal Ministries Department

Editor: Gary B. Swanson
Design: Linda McDonald

Available from:

AdventSource
5040 Prescott Avenue
Lincoln, NE 68506
800.328.0525
www.adventsource.org

Copyright © 2008 by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

All rights reserved. You may copy these materials for local church use. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise for sale or distribution in any way outside of the local church leadership without the prior written permission of the copyright holder.

Printed in the United States of America

ISBN: 978-1-57756-529-1

COUNSELS ON SABBATH SCHOOL TEACHING

“The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers. If in one place there are only two or three who know the truth, let them form themselves into a band of workers. Let them keep their bond of union unbroken, pressing together in love and unity, encouraging one another to advance, each gaining courage and strength from the assistance of the others. Let them reveal Christlike forbearance and patience, speaking no hasty words, using the talent of speech to build one another up in the most holy faith. Let them labor in Christlike love for those outside the fold, forgetting self in their endeavor to help others. As they work and pray in Christ’s name, their numbers will increase; for the Saviour says: ‘If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven.’ Matthew 18:19.”¹

“God has so related us individually to the great web of humanity that unconsciously we draw from others, with whom we are brought in contact, their ways, practices, and habits.”²

“It was by personal contact and association that Jesus trained His disciples....He linked their interest with His, and they united with Him in the work.”³

“In His presence souls despised and fallen realized that they still were men, and they longed to prove themselves worthy of His regard. In many a heart that seemed dead to all things holy, were awakened new impulses. To many a despairing one there opened the possibility of a new life.”⁴

Visual Communication

“Jesus watched with deep earnestness the changing countenances of His hearers....When the truth, plainly spoken, touched some cherished idol, He marked the change of countenance, the cold, forbidding look, which told that the light was unwelcome.”⁵

“[Jesus] discerned the impressible heart, the open mind, the receptive spirit....He watched the faces of His hearers, marked the lighting up of the countenance, the quick, responsive glance, which told that truth had reached the soul.”⁶

Non-judgmental Climate

“Jesus had convinced [the woman at the well] that He read the secrets of her life; yet she felt that He was her friend, pitying and loving her. While the very purity of His presence condemned her sin, He had spoken no word of denunciation, but had told her of His grace, that could renew the soul.”⁷

Jesus’ Varied Approach

“While [Jesus] ministered to the poor, Jesus studied also to find ways of reaching the rich. He sought the acquaintance of the wealthy and cultured Pharisee, the Jewish nobleman, and the Roman ruler.”⁸

Mingling With Class Members

“[Jesus] accepted their invitations, attended their feasts, made Himself familiar with their interests and occupations, that He might gain access to their hearts, and reveal to them the imperishable riches.”⁹

Changing Attitudes

“If teachers would humble their hearts before God and realize the responsibilities they have accepted in taking charge of the youth with the object of educating them for the future immortal life, a marked change would soon be seen in their attitude.”¹⁰

“Jesus found access to minds by the pathway of their most familiar associations....He gains access to the heart by securing sympathy and confidence, making all feel that His identification with their nature and interest is complete.”¹¹

Making Meaning

“From [Jesus’] lips the word of God came home to men’s hearts with new power and new meaning.”¹²

Educated for Action

“Jesus taught that the religion of the Bible does not consist in selfish exclusiveness, in personal enjoyment, but in the doing of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness.”¹³

Experiential Learning

“All have not the same experience in their religious life. But those of diverse exercises come together and with simplicity and humbleness of mind talk out their experience. All who are pursuing the onward Christian course should have, and will have, an experience that is living, that is new and interesting. A living experience is made up of daily trials, conflicts, and temptations, strong efforts and victories, and great peace and joy gained through Jesus. A simple relation of such experiences gives light, strength, and knowledge that will aid others in their advancement in the divine life.”¹⁴

Conversational Teaching

“Often a minister is obliged to speak in a crowded, overheated room. The listeners become drowsy, their senses are half paralyzed, and it is almost impossible for them to grasp the subjects presented. If instead of preaching to them, the speaker would try to teach them, asking them questions, and speaking in a conversational tone, their minds would be aroused to activity, and they would be able more clearly to comprehend the truths opened before them. Their understanding would take hold of the living reality of the truths necessary for the quickening of the perception and for growth

in knowledge. As he goes over his discourse, point by point, allowing his hearers to ask questions and make suggestions, he will himself obtain a better idea of his subject. Unless the great truths of God's Word are clearly opened before the understanding, they cannot be comprehended by the mind, or put into practice in the life."¹⁵

The Highest of All Sciences

"It means so much more than finite minds can comprehend, to present in every missionary effort Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. This is to be the burden of our work. If any one thinks he is capable of teaching in the Sabbath school or in the day school the science of education, he needs first to learn the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom, that he may teach this the highest of all sciences."¹⁶

Selection of Teachers

"The instruction given youth and children should not be of a superficial character. The teachers should do all in their power, as those standing in defense of the truth, to raise the standard high. There cannot be a worse thing done for your Sabbath school than to place as workers young men and young women who have shown great defects in their religious experience....Do not lower the standard in your Sabbath schools. Your children must have as their teachers those whose example and influence will be a blessing rather than a curse. They must have constantly before them a high sense of the virtue, purity, and holiness which characterize the Christian life. Their ideas upon this point must not become confused; let none move unwisely or ignorantly in these matters. Give not, by voice or pen, encouragement to men or women who have not moral worth, whose past life shows a want of conscience and integrity. They may be sharp, witty, and intelligent; but if

the heart is not imbued with the Spirit of God, and if they have not integrity of character, their influence points earthward, not heavenward, and will be detrimental, wherever they are, and in whatever they may engage.

“We are in great need of men and women who sense sin and hate iniquity; who have spiritual eyesight to discern the wants of the cause of God, and to work with a devoted, unselfish interest, keeping self ever hid in Jesus. We want young men of whom God can approve, who have practical godliness, who have consciences quick to feel and sense danger; men and women who will not exalt themselves, and will not seek to hide the deformity of the soul under a cloak of godliness; those who feel their weakness and imperfections of character, and who will hang their helpless souls upon Jesus Christ. Those who are self-confident, and think their way is above criticism, will show very imperfect work. Said the apostle, ‘When I am weak, then am I strong.’ While sensing his weakness, he by faith laid hold of Jesus Christ and His grace....

“Every Sabbath school worker who has passed from death unto life through the transforming grace of Christ, will reveal the deep moving of the Spirit of God upon his own heart. Those who attempt to direct others, who make a pretension of guiding souls to the path of holiness, while their own life is marked with pleasure loving, with pride, and with love of display, are unfaithful servants. Their life is not in accordance with their profession; their influence is an offense to God. They need a thorough conversion. Their hearts are so filled up with rubbish that there is no room for ennobling, elevated truth. The soul temple needs to be refined, purified, cleansed; for Satan rather than God is abiding in the heart.”¹⁷

“It is essential that care should be taken when placing men and women in positions of trust. You should know something in regard to their past life, and the character that has been developed. You would better double your classes under God-fearing workers than to multiply teachers whose influence is not in accordance with the holy character of truth which we profess, for their influence will be demoralizing.”¹⁷

Essential Qualifications

“Those whose duty it is to select teachers should be guarded, and not urge those into the school who are not fitted to exert a 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 the teacher is not in his place, and the class are left to amuse themselves, and the teacher comes rushing in breathless, behind time, the influence is leading to nonpunctuality and disorder.

Well-Balanced Minds, Symmetrical Characters

“Well balanced minds and symmetrical characters are required as teachers in every line. Give not this work into the hands of young women and young men who know not how to deal with human minds. They know so little of the controlling power of grace upon their own hearts and characters that they have to unlearn, and learn entirely new lessons in Christian experience. They have never learned to keep their own soul and character under discipline to Jesus Christ, and bring even the thoughts into captivity to Jesus Christ.

“There are all kinds of characters to deal with in the children and youth. Their minds are impressible. Any thing like a hasty, passionate exhibition on the part of the teacher may cut off her influence for good over the students whom she is having the name of educating. And will this education be for the present and future eternal good of the children and youth? There is the correct influence to be exerted upon them for their spiritual good. Instruction is to be constantly given to encourage the children in the formation of correct habits in speech, in voice, in deportment.”¹⁸

“Many of those children have not had proper training at home. They have been sadly neglected. Some have been left to do as they pleased; others have been found fault with and

discouraged. But little pleasantness and cheerfulness have been shown toward them, and but few words of approval have been spoken to them. The defective characters of the parents have been inherited, and the discipline given by these defective characters has been objectionable in the formation of characters. Solid timbers have not been brought into the character building. There is no more important work that can be done than the educating and training of these youth and children. The teachers who work in this part of the Lord's vineyard need to learn first how to be self-possessed, keeping their own temper and feelings under control, in subjection to the Holy Spirit of God. They should give evidence of having not a one-sided experience, but a well balanced mind, a symmetrical character so that they can be trusted because they are conscientious Christians, themselves under the chief Teacher."¹⁹

Dress and Deportment

“Every teacher in the Sabbath school should be a follower of Christ, and those who have not identified themselves as the disciples of Christ, showing by a consistent life that they are Christians, should not be invited to become teachers in the Sabbath school, for they have need that some one first teach them the foundation principles of the love and fear of God. ‘Without Me,’ Christ says, ‘ye can do nothing.’ Then of what value would be the teaching of one who knew nothing by personal experience of the power of Christ? It would be a great inconsistency to urge such a one to take a class in the Sabbath school, but it is even worse to permit a class to be under the influence of a teacher whose dress and deportment deny the Saviour, whom he professes to serve.

“Those who teach in Sabbath school must have their hearts warmed and invigorated by the truth of God, being not hearers only, but also doers of the Word. They should be nourished in Christ as the branches are nourished in the vine. The dews of heavenly grace should fall upon them, that their hearts may be like precious plants, whose buds open and expand and give forth a grateful fragrance, as flowers in the

garden of God. Teachers should be diligent students of the word of God, and ever reveal the fact that they are learning daily lessons in the school of Christ, and are able to communicate to others the light they have received from Him who is the Great Teacher, the Light of the world.

“Teachers should feel their responsibility, and make use of every opportunity to improve, that they may render the best kind of service in a manner that will result in the salvation of souls. Both teachers and pupils should awake to the importance of manifesting industry and perseverance in the study of God’s word. They should be much in communion with God, where petty temptations will not control them, and indolence and apathy will be successfully resisted. No idleness, no self-indulgence should be allowed by those who profess to be Christian workers.”²⁰

A Representative of True Christian Experience

“The truly converted laborer in the Sabbath school will not be molded after the customs and practices of the world, but will stand in moral independence. He will set an example that will be consistent with his profession, coming out from the world, and maintaining a separation from its spirit and fashions. He will not be turned in the least from his steadfast purpose to be one with Christ, nor yield an iota from his stand of fidelity to God, in opposition to pride, to indulgence in selfish amusement, to expenditure of means for the gratification of inclination or love of display, but will be an example in spirit, deportment, and dress.”²¹

“Sabbath school worker, which will you meet, the standard of Christ or that of the world? Oh, will you say, ‘I will lift the cross and follow Jesus’? Will you not cultivate His tenderness in persuasion, His earnestness in exhortation, and exemplify the exalted principles of the truth, manifesting in life and character what the religion of Christ has done for you?

Shall we not all heed the exhortation of the apostle, 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof'?

"There is need of representing genuine religion before the youth. Such religion will prove a vital power, an all-pervading influence. From heartfelt devotion, joyousness, freshness, and continual growth, will spring, and this is the religion that the youth must behold if they are to be drawn to Christ. This kind of religion will leave its divine impression upon souls, and its possessor will be renewed both mentally and physically by the refreshing grace of God.

"Try it for one year, you who are educators and teachers in our Sabbath and day schools, and see if you will not be able to say, 'The Lord hath wrought wondrously for us, for many souls have been brought to the Master, as precious sheaves for the heavenly garner.'"²¹

Self-examination

"The Lord would have the teachers of our Sabbath schools examine themselves whether they be in the love of God. There will be tests and provings of God to try the character in the experience of all who are working in the cause of God. The teachers should be constantly learning and striving for a more thorough understanding, a right judgment in the things of God. There is danger of the teachers becoming self-confident, and so filled with self-esteem that they will not realize their own deficiencies, that there is with them a narrowness of ideas, and they do not broaden or expand. They do not become more and more capable, but more and more self-important. They do not bring Jesus into their hearts and into their experiences. The teacher should cultivate his powers, cultivate his speech so as to speak distinctly, giving intelligent articulation. The mental powers should be cultivated, not be left so weak, and the powers of thought so confused, that they cannot explain nor understand the doctrines of our faith. If the teacher is not one of sincere piety, of purity, of self-denial, of willingness to endure inconvenience, then he is not fit for the great and

solemn work. It is the duty of the teacher to test his own powers, his own spirit, and understand his true position before God, by close examination.”²²

The Teacher’s Example

“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. He will cultivate reverence, cheerfulness, and firmness. Let the deportment be of that character that your class will be educated to have solemn thoughts and reverence toward God. While the ideas may be presented in simplicity, the language, when speaking of God, of Christ, His sufferings, His resurrection, as realities to you, should carry the minds up high above earthly things, and make them feel that they are in the presence of the Infinite One.

“The Sabbath school is no place for that class who skim the surface, who talk fluently and in a spirit of levity of eternal, testing truths, which are higher than the heavens and broader than the worlds. The behavior of a class will represent the character of a teacher in the example which they have before them. If they are rude, and continue so, if irreverent, then there is a cause, and the matter needs to be thoroughly probed.”²³

Reverent yet Cheerful

“The teacher may have reverence and yet be cheerful. And in the place of flippancy of manner, he should be a searcher for the deep things of God. Any affectation will not be natural. Let the class receive the impression that religion is a reality, that it is desirable; for it brings peace and rest and happiness. Let not your class receive the impression that a cold, unsympathetic character is religion. Let the peace and glory of Christ’s presence within make the face speak His love, the lips utter thankfulness and praise.”²⁴

The Teacher's Influence

“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.

“The badge of Christianity is not an outward sign, not the wearing of a cross or a crown, but it is that which reveals the union of man with God. By the power of His grace manifested in the transformation of character the world is to be convinced that God has sent His Son as its Redeemer. No other influence that can surround the human soul has such power as the influence of an unselfish life. The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian.”²⁵

Patience With the Wayward

“Remember that you cannot read hearts. You do not know the motives which prompted the actions that to you look wrong. There are many who have not received a right education; their characters are warped, they are hard and gnarled, and seem to be crooked in every way. But the grace of Christ can transform them. Never cast them aside, never drive them to discouragement or despair by saying, ‘You have disappointed me, and I will not try to help you.’ A few words spoken hastily under provocation,—just what we think they deserve,—may cut the cords of influence that should have bound their hearts to ours.

“The consistent life, the patient forbearance, the spirit unruffled under provocation, is always the most conclusive argument and the most solemn appeal. If you have had opportunities and advantages that have not fallen to the lot of others, consider this, and be ever a wise, careful, gentle teacher.

“In order to have the wax take a clear, strong impression of the seal, you do not dash the seal upon it in a hasty, violent way; you carefully place the seal on the plastic wax, and quietly, steadily press it down, until it has hardened in the mold. In like manner deal with human souls. The continuity of Christian influence is the secret of its power, and this depends on the steadfastness of your manifestation of the character of Christ. Help those who have erred, by telling them of your experiences. Show how, when you made grave mistakes, patience, kindness, and helpfulness on the part of your fellow workers gave you courage and hope.

“Until the judgment you will never know the influence of a kind, considerate course toward the inconsistent, the unreasonable, the unworthy. When we meet with ingratitude and betrayal of sacred trusts, we are roused to show our contempt or indignation. This the guilty expect, they are prepared for it. But kind forbearance takes them by surprise, and often awakens their better impulses, and arouses a longing for a nobler life.”²⁶

Tolerance for Others

“Every association of life calls for the exercise of self-control, forbearance, and sympathy. We differ so widely in disposition, habits, education, that our ways of looking at things vary. We judge differently. Our understanding of truth, our ideas in regard to the conduct of life, are not in all respects the same. There are no two whose experience is alike in every particular. The trials of one are not the trials of another. The duties that one finds light, are to another most difficult and perplexing.

“So frail, so ignorant, so liable to misconception is human nature, that each should be careful in the estimate he places upon another. We little know the bearing of our acts upon the experience of others. What we do or say may seem to us of little moment, when, could our eyes be opened, we should see that upon it depended the most important results for good or for evil.”²⁷

Self-improvement

“Because there is so much cheapness of character, so much of the counterfeit all around the youth, there is the more need that the teacher’s words, attitude, and deportment should represent the elevated and the true. Children are quick to detect affectation or any other weakness or defect. The teacher can gain the respect of his pupils in no other way than by revealing in his own character the principles which he seeks to teach them.

“But the teacher’s usefulness depends not so much upon the actual amount of his acquirements as upon the standard at which he aims. 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.

“Teachers are needed who are quick to discern and improve every opportunity for doing good; those who with enthusiasm combine true dignity; who are able to control, and ‘apt to teach’; who can inspire thought, arouse energy, and impart courage and life.

“A teacher’s advantages may have been limited, so that he may not possess as high literary qualifications as might be desirable; yet if he has true insight into human nature; if he has a genuine love for his work, an appreciation of its magnitude, and a determination to improve; if he is willing to labor earnestly and perseveringly, he will comprehend the needs of his pupils, and, by his sympathetic, progressive spirit, will inspire them to follow as he seeks to lead them onward and upward.

“The children and youth under the teacher’s care differ widely in disposition, habits, and training. Some have no definite purpose or fixed principles. They need to be awakened to their responsibilities and possibilities.

“He who discerns the opportunities and privileges of his work will allow nothing to stand in the way of earnest endeavor for self-improvement. He will spare no pains to reach the highest standard of excellence. All that he desires his pupils to become, he will himself strive to be.”²⁸

Provision for Increased Ability

“We must have consecrated teachers, who love God supremely and their neighbors as themselves. The Lord has made ample provision that teachers may have increased ability from Sabbath to Sabbath, that they may teach to some purpose, working as for time and eternity. We need in our schools young men and women who have vital godliness, not a cheap, superficial experience, but a deep inward piety that results from learning daily in the school of Christ, that they may impart to others the precious lessons which Christ has taught them.

“Those who are satisfied with following a certain dry order, of going through a round, will miss the mark, and fail of the work that should be done by a Sabbath school teacher; but if those who engage in this important branch of God’s cause are Christians in the full sense of the word, doing the work given them of God in His fear, working with love for souls, for whom Christ died, they will be laborers together with God.”²⁹

Teaching in the Holy Spirit

“If teachers would ever bear in mind that it is the Holy Spirit that must reveal to the soul glimpses of heavenly things, and that as they work in the Spirit of Christ, this heavenly agent is impressing the mind with divine truth; if they would ever realize that angels are about them, that they are standing upon holy ground, much more efficient work would be done in our Sabbath schools. The teachers would not be devoid of spiritual grace and power, for they would have a realization of the divine presence; they would understand that they were but the human agents through whom Christ was

imparting His heavenly light. Their labors would be instinct with earnestness and power, and they would know that the Spirit helpeth their infirmities.”³⁰

Christ, Not Man, the Model

“Let not the teacher in Sabbath school follow the example of those who do not grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, even though those who minister in the sacred desk have given them such an example. He who would be accepted as a laborer together with God must not be found imitating the tone, manners, or ideas of any other man. He must learn of God, and be endowed with heavenly wisdom. God has given the gift of reason and intellect to one worker the same as He has to another; and according to your ability you are to put your talents out to the exchangers. The Lord would not have any worker the mere shadow of another whom he admires. The teacher must grow up into the measure of the stature of Christ, not to the measure of some finite erring mortal. You are to ‘grow in grace,’ and where is grace to be found?—Only in Christ, the divine Pattern.

“Then let every one look to Christ and copy the divine Model. Let every worker tax his powers to the utmost to work in harmony with the plan of God. Let him learn in the school of Christ, that he may be wise in instructing others. Those who are committed to the care of the teacher in the Sabbath school will need the wisdom and experience that God can give to the follower of Christ. Let the teacher learn of Christ’s meekness and lowliness of heart, that he may be a true teacher, and win his pupils to Christ, that they, in turn, may become faithful missionaries in the great harvest field.”³¹

Love the Constraining Power

“There is altogether too little sympathy brought into our labor for souls. There is not that beseeching, wooing, drawing power that God requires us to exert that souls may be reconciled to Him. If we teach the truth as it is in Jesus, religion will not be regarded as a drudgery, but as a delight.

Let the teachers bring sunshine, gratitude, and hearts full of tenderness and Christlike compassion, into their work, and leaven the hearts of their scholars with the spirit of unselfish love; for this is the spirit that pervades heaven. Shall not the workers in the Sabbath school divest themselves of all pride and self-love, and heartily and sincerely become doers of the word? 'Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.' Genuine faith confides in Christ, and renders implicit submission, consenting to follow Him wheresoever He goeth. When this is fulfilled, as a result of well-directed efforts, many souls will be brought as precious sheaves to the Master.

"Parents and teachers should seek to impress the minds of the children from their earliest years with the importance of salvation. They should teach the children that God is their heavenly Father, that His love is expressed to them in the gift of His only-begotten Son, and that the Saviour of the world manifested His love toward them in coming to our world to die that we might live. If these lessons are presented in love and tenderness, they will leave a lasting impression upon the minds and hearts of the youth. As images and objects are reflected from the face of the mirror, when revealed by the sunlight, so these themes will be mirrored in the mind when illumined by the love of Christ."³²

Simplicity and Sympathy

"How important are the lessons that may be given to the children and youth in unfolding the Scriptures in the simplicity of Christ. Let the teacher leave all his hard, high-sounding words at home, and take only the simplest words, that will be readily comprehended by the minds of the young.

"But in order to be a successful teacher, not only should the methods of teaching be simple, but you must take sympathy and love with you into the Sabbath school. The children will recognize this element and be influenced by it. Men and women are only grown-up children. Do we not respond to words and looks of real sympathy and love? Jesus, the divine Teacher, assured His disciples of His love toward

them. He assumed human nature for no other purpose than to display to men the mercy, the love, and the goodness of God in providing for the salvation and happiness of His creatures. It was for this end that He died. While uttering His tenderest words of sympathy, He rejoiced in the consciousness that He intended to do 'exceeding abundantly,' above what they were able to ask or think. Daily He exhibited before them, in works of blessing to man, how great was His tenderness and love to the fallen race. His heart was a fountain of inexhaustible compassion, from which the longing heart could be supplied with the water of life.

"When Jesus spoke to the people, they were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. The scribes had labored to establish their theories, and they had to labor to sustain them, and to keep their influence over the minds of the people, by endless repetition of fables and childish traditions. The loftiest models of public instruction consisted largely in going through heartless rounds of unmeaning ceremonies, and in the repetition of frivolous opinions. The teaching of Jesus inculcated the weightiest ideas and the most sublime truths in the most comprehensible and simple manner, and 'the common people heard Him gladly.' This is the kind of instruction that should be given in our Sabbath schools. Light, heaven's light, must be reflected from Jesus, the wonderful Teacher, and the souls of the children and youth must be illumined with the divine glory of His character and love. Thus the children may be led in beautiful simplicity to 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'"³³

Fresh Themes to Be Presented

"The soul should be like a treasure house, full of rich and beautiful stores. In the pulpit, in the Sabbath school, in the prayer meeting, and in society, we should have fresh themes with which to enlighten others. We should follow the example of Jesus, who was the perfect Teacher. He educated men by revealing to them the character of the living God. He said, 'This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true

God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.’ This is the important subject to impress upon the minds of youth; for they must have a knowledge of the paternal character of God, in order that they may be led to subordinate temporal to eternal interests. By beholding the character of God, an intense desire will be created in their hearts to impart to others the beauty and power of truth.”³⁴

The Transforming Power of Christ

“Oh, that every man, woman, and child who deals with human minds, may have the truth inwrought in the soul, that it may be revealed in spirit, in word, in character, and in action! The sanctifying power of the truth should lead every one who teaches in the Sabbath school, or holds a position in our institutions, to have such an experience that he may say, ‘I know whom I have believed.’ There is transforming power in the religion of Jesus Christ, and this power must be seen upon us in far greater humility, in more earnest, living faith, that we may become a light to the world. Self must be humiliated, and Christ exalted. Why is it that those to whom God entrusts some work in His moral vineyard are so easily lifted up?”³⁵

Heart-searching Questions

“Why is it that many seem to think that a responsible position exalts the man? Why do they become so self-sufficient when they are so utterly dependent upon the atoning Sacrifice? Why is there with some so great a want of tenderness, so little heart work? It is because those who are self-sufficient have not fallen upon the Rock and been broken. This is why there is so little trust in God, so little earnest, contrite repentance, so great a lack of fervent prayer. Well may the questions be put by every instructor: ‘Have I received the Holy Ghost since I believed? Have I received Christ as my personal Saviour?’ Let these questions be solemnly answered.”³⁶

Every Moment Golden

“If those who are engaged in the work of God are Christians individually, their works will reveal the fact. They will present Christ to those with whom they come in contact. Teachers in Sabbath school will not occupy the time in unimportant matters, for they will realize that every moment is golden, and should be employed in working with all diligence in the garden of the Lord. The work of Christ in the sanctuary above, presenting His own blood each moment before the mercy seat, as He makes intercession for us, should have its full impression upon the heart, that we may realize the worth of each moment. Jesus ever liveth to make intercession for us; but one moment carelessly spent can never be recovered. Let teachers and pupils consider this great fact that Christ ceases not to engage in His solemn work in the heavenly sanctuary, and if you wear Christ’s yoke, if you lift Christ’s burden, you will be engaged in a work of like character with that of your Living Head.”³⁷

Cultivation of Character

“We need now to give special attention to the cultivation of character. Let this mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, that it may elevate and ennoble the highest as also the lowest worker in our Sabbath schools, so that Jesus will not be ashamed to acknowledge them as His colaborers. All spiritual culture Christ has provided for His children. If Jesus is abiding in the soul, the heart is filled with the holy graces of His Spirit, which makes itself manifest in the transforming of the features. If you would have beauty and loveliness of character, the divine law must be written upon the heart and carried out in the life.”³⁸

Making the Lessons Practical

“Let the teachers enter, heart and soul, into the subject matter of the lesson. Let them lay plans to make a practical application of the lesson, and awaken an interest in the minds and hearts of the children under their charge. Let the activities

of the scholars find scope in solving the problems of Bible truth. The teachers may give character to the work, so that the exercises will not be dry and uninteresting.

“Teachers do not make as earnest work as they should of the Sabbath school exercises; they should come close to the hearts of the scholars, by aptness, by sympathy, by patient and determined effort to interest every scholar in regard to the salvation of the soul. These exercises should become altogether what the Lord would have them,—seasons of deep conviction of sin, of heart reformation. If the right work is done, in a skillful, Christlike manner, souls will be convicted, and the inquiry will be, ‘What shall I do to be saved?’ ”³⁹

“It is not enough for us to know and respect the words of the Scriptures. We must enter into the understanding of them, studying them earnestly... Christians will reveal the degree to which they do this by the healthiness of their spiritual character. We must know the practical application of the Word to our own individual character-building. We are to be holy temples, in which God can live and walk and work. Never must we strive to lift ourselves above the servants whom God has chosen to do His work and to honor His holy name. ‘All ye are brethren.’ Let us apply this Word to our individual selves, comparing scripture with scripture.”⁴⁰

The Use of Learning Cues

“Some efforts have been made to interest children in the cause, but not enough. Our Sabbath schools should be made more interesting. The public schools have of late years greatly improved their methods of teaching. Object lessons, pictures, and blackboards are used to make difficult lessons clear to the youthful mind. Just so may present truth be simplified and made intensely interesting to the active minds of the children.

“Parents who can be approached in no other way are frequently reached through their children. Sabbath school teachers can instruct the children in the truth, and they will, in turn, take it into the home circle. But few teachers seem to understand the importance of this branch of the work. The modes of teaching which have been adopted with such

success in the public schools could be employed with similar results in the Sabbath schools, and be the means of bringing children to Jesus and educating them in Bible truth. This will do far more good than religious excitement of an emotional character, that passes off as rapidly as it comes.

“The love of Christ should be cherished. More faith is needed in the work which we believe is to be done before the coming of Christ. There should be more self-denying, self-sacrificing labor in the right direction. There should be thoughtful, prayerful study how to work to the best advantage. Careful plans should be matured. There are minds among us that can invent and carry out, if they are only put to use. Great results would follow well-directed and intelligent efforts.”⁴¹

Soul Winning Teaching Is More Than Talking

“The Sabbath school, if rightly conducted, is one of God’s great instrumentalities to bring souls to a knowledge of the truth. It is not the best plan for teachers to do all the talking, but they should draw out the class to tell what they know. Then let the teacher, with a few brief, pointed remarks or illustrations, impress the lesson upon their minds. Under no circumstances should teachers go through the lesson mechanically, and then sit down, leaving the children to stare about, or whisper and play, as we have seen them do. Such teaching is not beneficial; it is often injurious. If the teacher is properly prepared, every moment can be used to profit. The active minds of the children should be kept constantly employed. Their ideas should be drawn out and corrected, or approved, as the case may require. But never should the teacher sit down, saying, ‘I am through.’ There is no such thing as getting through with the lesson.”⁴²

Source of Spiritual Power

“In some Sabbath schools, positions are given to persons who have no aptitude to teach. They have no earnest love for souls. They do not half understand the practical bearings of the truth themselves. How, then, can they lead the children and youth to the living Fountain? Let the teachers

themselves drink deep of the water of salvation, and the angels of God will minister to them, and they will know just what course the Lord would have them take to win the precious youth to Jesus. It requires aptitude, a will, perseverance, a spirit such as Jacob had when he wrestled in prayer, and exclaimed, 'I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.' When the blessing of God rests upon the teachers, it can but be reflected to those under their charge. Never place the youth under individuals who are spiritually indolent, who have no high, elevated, holy aspirations; for the same mind of indifference, pharisaism, of form without the power, will be seen in both teachers and scholars."⁴³

No Combative Spirit in Spiritual Learning

"Lessons should be taught in the Sabbath school that will shed light into the chambers of heart and mind. And that this may be accomplished, the teachers must be under the influence of the Holy Spirit, that all selfishness may be subdued, that no hasty word may be spoken, no inconsiderate action may be performed, but that the grace of God may be manifested as working with human effort for the salvation of souls. This should be the great end of Sabbath school work. The Sabbath school should not be made a place for controversy; it is not the place to make differences of opinion manifested. Let all this kind of work be kept out of the school, and let harmony be maintained. If ideas are advanced that are questioned by members of the school, let not a combative spirit arise and discussion and controversy follow."⁴⁴

Don't Read the Lesson to the Class

"In some schools, I am sorry to say, the custom prevails of reading the lesson from the lesson sheet. This should not be. It need not be, if the time that is often needlessly and even sinfully employed, were given to the study of the Scriptures. There is no reason why Sabbath school lessons should be less perfectly learned by teachers or pupils than

are the lessons of the day school. They should be better learned, as they treat of subjects infinitely more important. A neglect here is displeasing to God.”⁴⁵

Skimming the Surface

“Teachers will become disqualified for their position if they are not learners. They need freshness of ideas, fresh, wise plans, life, tact, and spirit in their work. They must be apt to teach...Do not skim the surface; work deep. The Bible is the rule and guide of the life. Sound doctrine must be brought into actual contact with the minds and hearts of your scholars; then it will produce fruit, for sound practice will be seen as the result of your labors.”⁴⁶

Teaching Is More than Simply Reciting the Lesson

“The teacher should not confine himself to the repetition of the set words of the lesson, yet he wants to be perfectly familiar with the words as well as the ideas. Every teacher, before he stands at the head of his class, should have his plans distinctly laid out in his mind as to what he wants to do for that day and on that occasion. Reciting a lesson yourself before the class is not teaching it; you want simple words and plainly, clearly stated ideas. Make sure that your scholars understand you. If they cannot comprehend your ideas, then your labor is lost.”⁴⁷

Long, Tedious Remarks

“Those who instruct children should avoid tedious remarks. Short remarks and to the point will have a happy influence. If much is to be said, make up for briefness by frequency. A few words of interest now and then will be more beneficial than to have it all at once. Long speeches burden the small minds of children. Too much talk will lead them to loathe even spiritual instruction, just as overeating burdens the stomach and lessens the appetite, leading even to a loathing of food. The minds of the people may be glutted with

too much speechifying. Labor for the church, but especially for the youth, should be line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little. Give minds time to digest the truths you feed them. Children must be drawn toward heaven, not rashly, but very gently.”⁴⁸

What It Means to Be a Laborer With God

“Young men likewise exhort to be sober-minded. In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

“Where sincere piety is lacking, where daily communion with God is neglected, the teacher in the Sabbath school will be dry and tedious in his manner of teaching. His words will have no power to reach the hearts of his pupils.

“To be laborers together with God means a great deal more than merely to go to Sabbath school, and attend the services of the church, and take part in the work of teaching, and in bearing testimony in the social service.

“To be a laborer together with God means that your heart is drawn out in strong desire for the salvation of the sinful souls for whom Christ has died. It means that you are filled with solicitude for the work, that you are ever planning to make your instruction interesting, to devise ways that you may draw with every entrusted power of your nature along the lines in which Christ is drawing, that souls may be won to His service and be bound to Him by the cords of His infinite love.”⁴⁹

The Work Marred by Unconsecrated Effort

“Laborers together with God do not feel like shrinking from sacred obligations; but for Christ’s sake they are willing to endure toil, to suffer privation and reproach. They are willing to meet with repulses, though this is hard to bear and humiliating to human pride. But the laborer together with God will remember that Jesus bore shame and insult, rejection and death, that He might save those who were lost. Every part of the varied labor in the harvest field means sacrifice

and self-denial. It means that the time usually spent in matters of minor importance should be spent in searching the Scriptures, that you may know how to labor successfully in the work to which you are appointed. It means that you must become acquainted with the Spirit of God. It means that you must do much praying, and have much serious thought as to how you may put to use every capability of your nature, and carry forward the work of God effectively.

“You are God’s employed servants, delegated to build up His kingdom in the earth, and you are to do your part in saving the souls for whom Christ has paid the price of His own blood. Is it then a slight matter to teach in the Sabbath school, without a preparation of heart for this momentous work? Many who undertake teaching a class feel little interest in it, and they mar the sacred work by their unconsecrated efforts.”⁵⁰

The Temptation to Reveal Self

“In every grade, in both primary and advanced classes, teachers need to look constantly to the great source of light for wisdom, for grace, and for power to mold the hearts of their scholars, and that they may deal intelligently with the purchase of Christ’s blood. Each teacher should be a humble follower of Him who is meek and lowly in heart. No one should study or work that he may be considered a superior teacher, or a person of unusual ability, but that he may lead souls to Christ. There will come temptations to weave self into all that is done, but the work will be marred if this is done, for it will lead to making dry, lengthy remarks that will fail to interest or benefit the minds of the children.”⁵¹

Giving Wholehearted Service

“The Lord would have teachers 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. The Lord would have working Christians in His church; for the worker has fewer temptations than those who have little to do. Those who truly believe in Christ will become laborers together with God. They will be

governed by His Spirit; their affections will be purified, their passions will be controlled, and precious fruits will appear in their lives for the glory of God; for those who truly believe in Christ will reflect light.”⁵²

Salvation of Souls the Highest Interest

“The teacher’s obligations are weighty and sacred, but no part of the work is more important than to look after the youth with tender, loving solicitude, that they may feel that we have a friend in them. Once gain their confidence, and you can lead them, control them, and train them easily. The holy motives of our Christian principles must be brought into our life. The salvation of our pupils is the highest interest entrusted to the God-fearing teacher. He is Christ’s worker, and his special and determined effort should be to save souls from perdition and win them to Jesus Christ. God will require this at the hands of teachers. Every one should lead a life of piety, of purity, of painstaking effort in the discharge of every duty. If the heart is glowing with the love of God, there will be pure affection, which is essential; prayers will be fervent, and faithful warnings will be given. Neglect these, and the souls under your charge are endangered. Better spend less time in long speeches, or in absorbing study, and attend to these neglected duties.”⁵³

Perseverance Rewarded

“After all these efforts, teachers may find that some under their charge will develop unprincipled characters. They are lax in morals as the result, in many cases, of vicious example and neglected parental discipline. And teachers doing all they can will fail to bring these youth to a life of purity and holiness; and after patient discipline, affectionate labor, and fervent prayer, they will be disappointed by those from whom they have hoped so much. And in addition to this, the reproaches of the parents will come to them, because they did not have power to counteract the influence of their own example and unwise training. The teacher will have these discouragements after doing his duty. But he must work on,

trusting in God to work with him, standing at his post manfully, and laboring on in faith. Others will be saved to God, and their influence will be exerted in saving others. Let the minister, the Sabbath school teacher, and the teachers in our colleges unite heart and soul and purpose in the work of saving our youth from ruin.”⁵⁴

Lifting Up Christ

“The gospel is the power and wisdom of God, if it is correctly represented by those who claim to be Christians. Christ crucified for our sins should humble every soul before God in his own estimation. Christ risen from the dead, ascended on high, our living Intercessor in the presence of God, is the science of salvation, which we need to learn and teach to children and youth. Said Christ, ‘I sanctify Myself, that they might also be sanctified.’ This is the work that ever devolves upon every teacher. There must not be any haphazard work in this matter, for even the work of educating the children in the day schools requires very much of the grace of Christ and the subduing of self. Those who naturally are fretful, easily provoked, and have cherished the habit of criticism, of thinking evil, should find some other kind of work, that will not reproduce any of their unlovely traits of character in the children and youth, for they have cost too much. Heaven sees in the child the undeveloped man or woman, with capabilities and powers that, if correctly guided and developed, with heavenly wisdom, will become the human agencies through whom the divine influences can cooperate, to be laborers together with God. Sharp words and continual censure bewilder the child, but never reform him. Keep back that pettish word; keep your own spirit under discipline to Jesus Christ; then you will learn how to pity and sympathize with those brought under your influence.”⁵⁵

Whole Classes to Be Converted

“As workers for God we want more of Jesus and less of self. We should have more of a burden for souls, and should pray daily that strength and wisdom may be given us for the

Sabbath. Teachers, meet with your classes. Pray with them, and teach them how to pray. Let the heart be softened, and the petitions short and simple, but earnest. Let your words be few and well chosen; and let them learn from your lips and your example that the truth of God must be rooted in their hearts or they cannot stand the test of temptation. We want to see whole classes of young people being converted to God, and growing up useful members of the church.

“Do not allow all your strength and energy to be given to worldly, temporal things during the week, and so have no energy and moral strength to give to the service of Christ on the Sabbath. There is earnest work to be done just now. We have not a moment’s time to use selfishly. Let all we do be done with an eye single to the glory of God. Never rest till every child in your class is brought to the saving knowledge of Christ.”⁵⁶

The Supreme Joy

“To those who are accepted as teachers in our schools is opened a field of labor and cultivation, for the sowing of the seed and for the harvesting of the ripening grain. What can give greater satisfaction than to be laborers together with God in educating and training the children and youth to love God and keep His commandments? Lead the children whom you are instructing in the day school and the Sabbath school to Jesus. What can give you greater joy than to see children and youth following Christ, the Great Shepherd, who calls, and the sheep and lambs hear His voice and follow Him? What can spread more sunshine through the soul of the interested, devoted worker than to know that his persevering, patient labor is not in vain in the Lord, and to see his pupils have the sunshine of joy in their souls because Christ has forgiven their sins? What can be more satisfying to the worker together with God, than to see children and youth receiving the impressions of the Spirit of God in true nobility of character and in the restoration of the moral image of God—the children seeking the peace coming from the Prince of peace?”⁵⁷

For additional practical and creative online resources, visit www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org/go/cooltools

Endnotes:

- ¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, pp. 21, 22.
- ² *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 99.
- ³ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 152.
- ⁴ *Education*, p. 80.
- ⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 255.
- ⁶ *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 74.
- ⁷ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 189, 190.
- ⁸ *Gospel Workers*, pp. 45, 46.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- ¹⁰ *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 371, 372.
- ¹¹ *Counsels to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 190.
- ¹² *Education*, p. 82.
- ¹³ *Youth's Instructor*, August 16, 1894.
- ¹⁴ *In Heavenly Places*, p. 91.
- ¹⁵ Manuscript 41, 1903.
- ¹⁶ *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 89.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-91.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 92.
- ¹⁹ *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 266, 267.
- ²⁰ *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, pp. 93-95.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 96.
- ²² *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 97.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 98.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 99, 100.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 100, 101.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-104.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 104.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 105.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 105, 106.
- ³² *Ibid.*, pp. 106, 107.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 108, 109.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 109, 110.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 110.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 111.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 113.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 114.
- ⁴⁰ *Lift Him Up*, p. 105.
- ⁴¹ *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, pp. 114, 115.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 115.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 116, 117.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 118, 119.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 118.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 119.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 119, 120.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 120, 121.

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 121, 122.

⁵² Ibid., p. 122.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 122, 123.

⁵⁴ *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 116, 117.

⁵⁵ *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, pp. 124, 125.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 125.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 126.

Sabbath School Teaching is an easy-to-read compilation of Ellen G. White's advice for those involved with the Sabbath School program. Learn about creating a non-judgmental climate, selection of teachers, successful soul winning, and much more. This book is a must-read for Sabbath School teachers wishing to cultivate workers for Christ's kingdom.

For lots more Sabbath School resources visit www.sabbathschoolpersonalministries.org and click on "Cool Tools." This website has an extensive library of downloadable articles and activities to enhance the preparation of teachers and leaders.

SABBATH SCHOOL LEAFLETS IN THIS SERIES

- Sabbath School Organization
- Sabbath School Superintendent
- Adult Sabbath School Teacher
- Sabbath School Teaching
- Sabbath School Secretary
- Investment Secretary
- Sabbath School Welcome & Ushering
- How to Conduct a Community Friendly Sabbath School
- The Art of Visitation in the Sabbath School
- The Extension Division
- Branch Sabbath Schools
- Sabbath School Action Units

AdventSource

ISBN: 978-1-57756-529-1



9 781577 565291