

Nurturing the New Birth Experience

Nicodemus had heard Jesus' words and had seen some of His mighty works. He greatly desired an interview with Jesus but was reluctant to be seen with Him openly. A secret interview was planned, and there Nicodemus acknowledged Jesus as a Teacher sent from God, but not the Messiah. Jesus then opened up to him the principles of the new birth. He showed how Nicodemus could become a member of the family of God. This experience changed the life of this Jewish leader.

Our church schools have been commissioned to do the same work as Jesus did. Every child should learn Bible verses, Bible stories, and Bible truths. Most of all, however, each child needs to be taught how to become a member of the family of God. Very early in life a child learns that he or she must choose which of two different paths to follow—the right way to life or the wrong way to death. When the child is able to recognize that there is a choice, then he or she is old enough to make a decision for Christ.

When a baby is born the mother knows that even though the act of birth is completed, this is just the beginning of a long life, requiring much love and care. This is also true when a person is born into the

family of God. The new birth experience is only a beginning, not the end. When a child makes a decision for Christ, the parents, Sabbath school teachers, and church school teachers must pick up the challenge of nurturing this decision.

A child who attends church school hears much emphasis on Bible instruction, and rightly so. However, just becoming a good Bible student does not automatically make a person a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. As teachers, we need to know each child so well that we can assess his or her spiritual condition and provide the nurturing necessary.

Evangelism is not something conducted only by an evangelist before a large audience. Evangelism must take place *every day* in *every church school classroom*. What a blessing it would be if all would teach as Jesus taught! Whatever method Jesus used, He adapted it to fit His audience; and all His parables, examples, and lessons were designed to draw His hearers closer to God and make them fit subjects for the kingdom of heaven.

"The teaching of the Bible should have our freshest thought, our best methods, and our most earnest effort."¹ If this happened every day in every classroom, Bible classes would come alive. Students would see that the Word of God is relevant to their lives and problems today. The facts of the lessons would be applied to their lives and

would help them make decisions for Christ. This decision for Christ is more than a mere choice; it is a commitment for life, which must be nurtured all along the way. We cannot force a child into the kingdom of God, but we can cooperate with the Holy Spirit as the child grows and develops in spiritual understanding.

The years we have the children in our classrooms are important ones for character development and decision making. Many of these children are the future leaders of the church.

As you win their confidence in you as followers of Christ, it will be easy to teach them of the great love wherewith He has loved us. As you try to make plain the truths of salvation, and point the children to Christ as a personal Saviour, angels will be by your side.²

May every teacher take advantage of the help that the Lord has promised in bringing children to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.—Helen C. Craig. □

FOOTNOTES

¹ Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1903), p. 186.

² _____, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1940), p. 517.

Helen Craig taught church school for a number of years, and also served as a conference supervisor of elementary instruction. She is currently Associate Director of the General Conference of SDA Church Ministries Department, Washington, D.C.