

LIBRARY IN A BOX . . . Make it yourself

Topic—Building an effective file to provide materials to enhance Christian education

By Lorella Rouster

Magazines and papers strewn about Karen's room indicate a frantic search through several years' accumulation of literature. As the new leader of Girl Scout Troup 49, she is groping for ideas for a handcraft project. But must she completely abandon her house-keeping in the process?

Across town, a Sunday school teacher is deep in thought. John's illusion of success with his "city" boys was shattered last week, when one youngster interrupted his eloquent discourse on Jesus the Shepherd to blurt, "What is a sheep?"

How can Billy understand how Jesus is our Shepherd if he doesn't know what shepherds and sheep are "I saw a big picture of a sheep in an advertisement just last month. That might be a good start . . ." the teacher ponders.

But all attempts to locate the needed picture fail, and teacher is soon tired, discouraged, and irritated. The time is drawing short before Sunday. The boy's question will have to go unanswered this week. If only he could find that picture!

Mrs. Johnson is looking for a magazine clipping, too. It gave sound scriptural answers to the beliefs of an aggressive religious cult whose members have been calling on her. Did she put it in that book in the basement, or was that the one the children cut up?

These people all wish to serve God. They are all trying to meet their obligations as Sunday school teachers, community leaders, and personal ambassadors for Christ. But they are sometimes frustrated when their work is not as effective as they desire. Though they have access to such helps as libraries and bookstores, they often find it difficult to obtain help at the time it is needed. The wealth of information from magazines and quarterlies is all but lost because they can never find the right article at the right time.

One answer to the teacher's problem is a "library," inexpensively made from approximately three dollars worth of file folders, and a brightly covered cardboard box in lieu of a real file cabinet. Into this library goes vital material and information from magazines, newspapers, missions report, church bulletins, outdated quarterlies, and devotionals.

Since I started my library file, I rarely must resort to sorting through heaps of magazines and quarterlies with every lesson I develop. Now I reach into my library and pull out one or two folders.

For instance, I once saw an article in the local paper entitled "I Wonder.," Someone had written to several pastors asking, "Where is heaven and who is going there?" but had received no reply. I jumped at the opportunity to put in a word for my Lord, and worked

diligently, with only a Bible and a concordance, to answer the questions. But now I have my reply in my “library” and the next time someone asks me about heaven, I won’t have to work quite so hard!

In personal Bible study, the value of the file is inestimable. Here, from the common sources already mentioned, one may store a reservoir not only of information, but of such valuable aids as maps and pictures of Bible lands. This is an excellent place to store any small-sized visual aids you may own. I also place in my file a neat, detailed copy of each Bible lesson I teach, or devotional I present. Often I have had occasion to use such information again.

The audio-visual section will contain pictures for possible use in teaching – pictures of sheep to illustrate the concept of the Good Shepherd; of money to illustrate the principles of giving and sharing, and of a young lad grinning from ear to ear to illustrate our joy in Christ.

Teachers will also save stories with a moral – often secular stories can be adapted to illustrate a Bible truth. Also worthy of a place in the file are the maps found on the backs of quarterlies, and short, pungent statements from the church bulletin, the pastor’s sermons, or a favorite newspaper or magazine

A section on handcraft and hobbies could have saved our Girl Scout leader’s house-keeping reputation. Such a section, when used, usually results in more effective teaching. This section in my own file saved me face a few years ago at Christmas, when my funds were depleted. With the ideas found there, a sewing machine, and little creative thinking, I was able to transform scraps and unused objects into Christmas gifts.

The material you collect will divide and subdivide itself, falling into natural categories. For instance, when the picture grows too “fat,” you may subdivide it: animals, people, objects, etc. One folder for the entire Bible in the beginning will later become Old Testament and New Testament. Later, you may subdivide according to book content: law, history, poetry, prophecy. Eventually each individual book of the Bible may occupy one folder. By allowing each division to outgrow itself, and then looking for natural divisions in the material, I was able to avoid the waste of many nearly empty folders.

The material you will file is simply what you see and use every day – the picture that caught your eye, the article that held your interest. Devotionals and quarterlies are storehouses for building up your Bible sections. And be sure to use your ears to pick up and file interesting stories and events.

My excitement has grown as my own file has expanded in usefulness. The effort expended in this project has been greatly exceeded by the effort saved in having material readily available at any moment. So why sift through papers every time you prepare a Sunday school lesson? Sift them once – into your file, and have a “library” at your fingertips.