

Prepare your lesson through the week— Relax on Sunday Morning

It's such a grind, teaching Sunday school." Mary complained to her pastor. "I learn the lesson at eight o'clock, teach it at ten, and forget it at twelve. I'm not sure my pupils ever learn it at all!"

Mary's complaint could be repeated by many Sunday school teachers if they were honest. Almost every teacher has puzzled over the best way to prepare Bible lessons. Almost everyone has thought, if only I could make the lesson LIVE – in my life and in my pupils'!

As a student at Moody Bible Institute, I was introduced to a system of Bible study that produces just these results. The Six-W Plan has never failed to provide me with fresh, personal insight into the passage studied. It has seldom failed to impress the story on my mind so indelibly that I can tell it with no notes, and of course, no teacher's manual.

The plan is easy to remember – it asks six questions, all beginning with the letter W: Who? Where? When? What? Why? And Wherefore? Here's how it works.

On Monday, I read the lesson scripture once; asking, Who? All mention of persons, including pronouns and names of Deity, are recorded on paper. I find it helpful to include the important facts about each beside the name.

On Tuesday, I ask the next question – Where? Again I read the lesson scripture, noting all references to location, including such words as there, where, and here. If time allows, I may consult maps, chart the travels of an individual, or consult a Bible encyclopedia for more information on a particular locale.

As I read on Wednesday, I ask, When? Noting references to time. Numerical dates as we know them are not used in the Bible, but reference may be made to an event or the reign of a particular king. "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord..." (Isaiah 61). A chronological chart may then be consulted to obtain the date, if desired. In lessons about the life of Christ, I consult a harmony of the Gospels to see when the event occurred in relation to others in His life. The words then, when, before, after, and while can also help to answer the question When?

On Thursday, I read again, this time asking, What? I note all mention of objects and what is said of them.

By this time, I have carefully read the scripture four times, I am ready to see what I have learned. I close my Bible and ask myself, What happened? Then, aloud to myself or on paper, I recount in chronological order the events I have studied. A fifth reading follows to check on the accuracy of my memory and to add details I may have missed. This is an ideal time to make a simple outline.

The characters, places, time, objects, and events are now all in place. On Friday, I am ready to ask, “Why did things happen as they did?” A sixth reading examines the motives of the characters and tries to understand why they acted as they did.

The small boy David was able to kill the Philistine giant, Goliath. Why? Because he trusted in God. Because he faced Goliath in the name of the Lord God of Hosts.

I now have all the facts. I understand in some measure why the characters acted as they did. On Saturday, I am ready to put this knowledge to use in my life and in the lives of my pupils. As I ask the question Wherefore? I seek to find the relevance of the scripture to everyday life. All week applications have been coming to mind. Now I list them under two headings: “What does it mean to me?” and “What does it mean to my pupils?” I jot down specific things I will do in obedience to this lesson. I also list areas of my students’ lives where they might apply these truths in obedience – keeping in mind, of course, their ages, interests, and backgrounds.

Obviously this method of lesson preparation is not for the Sunday morning manual-skimmer. It requires some time every day of the week to prepare thoroughly. But if a teacher is willing to spend the time needed, he will surely find his teaching improving. Being confronted with the lesson daily, he has ample opportunity to put it to work in his own life. On Sunday he can teach not only what he has learned by reading, but what he has learned through experience. Only when a teacher has lived with a lesson all week is he able to teach it with real authority.

Have you ever studied at eight, taught at ten, and forgotten at twelve? Try the Six-W Plan this week and RELAX on Sunday morning.