

On Going Home Teaching

Paul Simmons

I am writing this article for a very simple reason. It was this or go home teaching. I know what you are thinking, but it's not true. Home teaching was my first choice. There are few things I would rather do than to go home teaching. Perhaps I should say that there are few things I would rather have done than to have gone home teaching, but you know what I mean. Tonight, however, home teaching was not to be. I am not worried, though. I have every confidence that we will yet visit our families this month. After all, we have until midnight tomorrow.

like to go. The circumstance that prevented us from going home teaching tonight was that tonight is Wednesday, and Wednesday nights my companion works. I should have known that he would have to work tonight. He always does on Wednesday nights. I don't know why it should have momentarily slipped my mind. But for one brief moment I had visions of completing our visits before the month's end, of reporting, with a clear conscience, with head erect, with an unwavering voice, with clean hands and a pure heart, that we had reached that magical mark—100 percent. But alas, tonight was Wednesday,

Oh little one so fresh from the pre-existence. What wondrous things you could tell me... before they slip away and are forgotten?...



If you could only speak... what would you say?



It is not that we (my companion and I) have put off going home teaching, I want you to understand. Rather, it is that we have been put off. No, not by the thought of home teaching nor by our families, but by matters not within our power to control. Our good intentions, as so often happens, were defeated by cruel circumstance. Oh, do not be deceived, gentle Reader. Circumstance is cruel. She is a subtle slavemaster. She comes to you innocently, in her child's frock, in pigtails and pug nose. But underneath she is an insidious siren, a temptress, an entrancing enchantress who would rule your life. Let her once into your life, and she will make it hers. She will abuse your agency, make you do that which ye fain would not, and provide a ready excuse to any who would rebuke you and set you back on that strait and narrow way leading to eternal life, of which the scripture truly says, "Few there be that find it." And why do they not find it? Circumstance! that tool of the devil, by which he cheateth our souls and leadeth us carefully down to—

But this article was to be about home teaching. The point I wish to make is that, I have found (and I believe my experience is not unique), circumstances too often prevent us from going home teaching, much as we would

and Wednesday nights my companion has to work.

Last night my companion was all set to go home teaching, but last night we had company drop in unexpectedly. The night before that, of course, was family home evening. Before that was Sunday, and—well, you know how Sundays are. In the years B.C. (Before Consolidation), Sunday was one continuous meeting, although it went under a variety of guises: elders quorum presidency meeting, priesthood meeting, Sunday School, ward council meeting, prayer meeting, sacrament meeting, fireside—there was barely time to read the Sunday comics and watch *Mork and Mindy*, let alone go home teaching. Day of rest? It was a day of everything but. Now that meetings are fewer and Sunday has begun to earn its ancient epithet, it seems a shame to spoil it by going home teaching. With our meetings not starting till one o'clock, Sunday is the one day I can sleep in. I don't get up till eleven now, and then it's the usual hurry to get the children bathed and dressed and to church on time. Even if there were time to go home teaching before church, it somehow doesn't seem right to go in the morning. Sort of like eating leftover anchovy pizza for breakfast. After church, I feel I owe it to my family to be

with them. After all, isn't that why they consolidated meetings, so we could have more time for our families? So Sunday nights we spend together as a family, except, of course, when we cannot agree on what show to watch.

Last Saturday I had to weed the garden, take the boys to their soccer game, and watch the game of the week. That night was our anniversary, so I had to take my wife out to dinner.

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The night before that, I had a basketball game. Of course I could not miss that. I never know when our team might get a thirty-point lead and I might get to play.

Thursday night I watched the children while my wife went to her aerobic dance class. The night before that was Wednesday, and Wednesday nights—But it seems we've been through this all once before.

play the RAF for first place. Wouldn't miss that for all the sauerkraut in Stuttgart. Besides, all work and no play make Jack—"

"A dull boy."

"Exactly. And oh yes, Friday we have war games all day, and they're showing that new Betty Grable movie Friday night. Saturday I've just got to let the men have some time to write their families. No other success can compensate—"

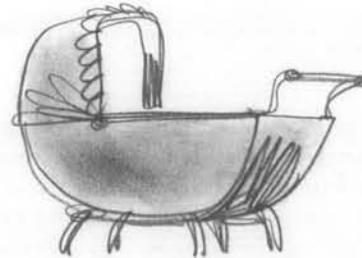
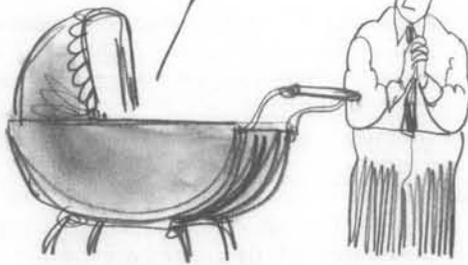
"Yes, yes, I know."

"And of course Sunday is a day of rest. No, there'll be no invasions on Sunday around here. So as you can see, this week is entirely out of the question. We'll just have to try again next week."

No, it never would have done. The French would still need liberating.

But tomorrow night we cannot fail. My companion has assured me he has no other commitments. My wife has agreed to stay home and watch the children all evening. There are no meetings, parties, work, or sports events to get in our way. Only one thing could possibly

HAVE YOU DONE
YOUR HOME TEACHING?



Cartoons by Calvin Gromdahl

In theory, home teaching is a simple activity. I call my companion, we call our families, we go and visit them. In theory, simple. Like changing a tire. Or fixing a leaking faucet. Or deriving the quadratic equation. But, I have found, in this less-than-perfect world things are rarely as simple as they seem. The logistics of home teaching, in theory quite simple, in actuality often overwhelm me.

I wonder that military commanders, who have to coordinate the activities of even more individuals than a hometeacher does, ever accomplish anything. But, then, they do not have such forces to contend with as we do. How would it be?

General Eisenhower runs into General Bradley leaving the officers' club in London.

"General Bradley!" he exclaims. "Just the fellow I've been looking for. How have you been? About that little invasion of France we were discussing. When could we get our men together to carry it off?"

"Oh, I'm afraid it's quite impossible this week," General Bradley replies. "Tomorrow we have our officers' training class, or had you forgotten? The next day is that twenty-mile march. Got to keep in shape. This war's not for sissies, you know. Thursday is the football game. We

go wrong. And the chances of it happening two months in a row surely must be slim. Besides, it was only a coincidence last month. And it is only a coincidence that we are going home teaching on the same day of the month this time. If we were to have the same results this month—No. That would be too many coincidences.

Nevertheless, the circumstances are uncannily similar. You see, last month, through no fault of our own, we could not go home teaching till the last day. We dutifully made our visits, but one man after another was not at home. It was not till later that we discovered the reason. They had all gone home teaching.



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