

BUILDING UP OUR BIBLE CLASSES

Text: Acts 2:6-8

INTRO: On the day of Pentecost, the 12 apostles were empowered to speak in languages they had never studied or learned, enabling those in their audiences to hear the gospel in the languages they were most familiar with. The truth was geared to the understanding of the audience.

There are other occasions where this principle may be illustrated. Ezek "sat where they sat," 3:15. When Philip taught the Ethiopian, he "began at the same Scripture" the eunuch had been reading, Acts 8:33.

Christians are admonished, both individually and collectively to teach the gospel, 2 Timothy 2:2; Acts 11:22-23.

Looking back over my own experiences, I find that almost 70% of those I have baptized were regular in attendance in Bible class, & of them, about 90% have remained faithful. Of the 30% who did not attend Bible classes, more than half have fallen away. I am persuaded that this is generally true of other preachers with whom I have had personal contact.

This being the case, we can surely see the wisdom of planning and working to improve our Bible classes, and increase the attendance to them.

I. BIBLE CLASSES ARE AUTHORIZED IN THE GENERAL COMMAND TO TEACH.

- A. Every case of teaching involves at least 4 things:
A time, a place, a method, an arrangement
- B. Since God has not limited us to some specific time, place, method, or arrangement, we are free to use common sense & good judgment in determining these matters for ourselves.

II. WE MUST GUARD AGAINST ABUSE OF THE BIBLE CLASS ARRANGEMENT.

- A. The Bible class is a Bible class. It is not a gossip session or a church business meeting. The purpose of a Bible class is to teach/learn the Bible.
- B. Some churches have allowed their Bible classes to become separate organizations within the church, with their own officers, treasury, activities, etc. Such is an abuse

of the Bible class arrangement. The Bible class should be nothing more or less than a systematic arrangement of teachers & learners to facilitate Bible study.

III. EVERY CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO STUDY HIS BIBLE FREQUENTLY AND SYSTEMATICALLY. The Bible class helps him do so.

A. Failure to study makes spiritual growth impossible.
Romans 10:17; Hosea 4:6; 1 Peter 2:2

B. The "dark ages" settled over Europe for hundreds of years because the Bible was withheld from the common people. Dark days are in store for the Lord's church when it is characterized by people who do not study their Bibles.

C. Every Christian should have his own copy of the Bible & should carry it with him to all church services. Write in the margins. Underline passages of special significance. The message is inspired. The paper, cover & ink are not holy. Anything that will help you understand or remember the message is a legitimate aid to Bible study.

D. The Bible is the most interesting & fascinating book ever written. Look forward to reading & studying it. Expect to be blessed & benefited & you will not be disappointed.

IV. THE BIBLE CLASS TEACHER IS AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE SUCCESS OF THE SYSTEM.

A. The teacher must know the lesson to the very best of his/her ability. A person cannot teach what he does not know.
Teachers: cultivate a love for the Bible in your own life. Study. Study. Study.

I long for Your salvation, O Lord; & Your law is my delight. (Psalm 119:174).

B. Teacher: don't just know the lesson. Know the background.

Know the context. Study the parallel passages. Look up the references.

C. Read from the Bible. The lesson aids are fine to help us in an orderly study--but our study is of the Bible.

D. Don't just read the text. Explain it. Illustrate it. Make it have meaning in the lives of the learners.

So they read distinctly from the book in the Law of God; & they gave the sense & helped them to understand the reading. (Neh. 8:8).

E. Learn to read correctly.

1. You are interpreting the Bible by the manner in which you read it. Gen 2:20, help meet; 1 Thes 4:16-17; Rom 1:13 "you ignorant brethren"

2. A preacher in West TX several years ago preached a powerful sermon about leaning--some lean toward the truth, some lean away from it, etc. His text was 2 Tim 3:7.

F. Don't get bogged down in something of no consequence or application. What Jesus wrote on the ground, what was Paul's thorn...

G. Try to be aware of what you are saying. Don't be like a broken record; don't always run to the same theme or hobby. Like the man who always taught about baptism.

H. Class discussion is great, but the teacher should be more than a moderator or referee. He is the teacher & it is his responsibility to see that the class is taught what they need to learn.

I. The teacher's life should be in harmony with his teaching. He who frequently neglects assemblies will not be very effective. No matter how much ability he has in the realm of teaching, his bad example will outweigh what he has to say about how others should love the Lord.

J. As best you can, know your pupils. Don't just teach the lesson. Teach your pupils.

V. USE WHATEVER HELPS, VISUAL AIDS, ETC., AS WILL PROMOTE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIBLE. But study the Bible. Some helps aren't & some aids don't.

A. Generally, "pictures" of Jesus are misleading. They can as easily detract from the lesson as aid it. There is no reason to suspect that Jesus was fair complexioned, effeminate-looking or had long blond hair. Such "pictures" aren't really pictures at all. Not only that, but they misrepresent Him, 1 Cor 11:14.

B. Pictures, etc., can sometimes be effective in teaching, esp. the teaching of small children, but when it comes to teaching the Bible it is NOT TRUE that a picture is worth 1,000 words. No picture could accurately portray the 118 words of the 23rd Psalm. No picture could take the place of 1 Cor 13 or Jesus' model prayer or His sermon on the mount. A picture may sometimes be helpful, but it can sometimes detract from the beauty & simplicity of the words that came from God. And remember, if pictures had been better than words, God could have inspired artists & sculptors instead of preachers & writers.

VI. WE NEED TO ENCOURAGE BETTER ATTENDANCE IN OUR BIBLE CLASSES.

A. We can do better if we try.

1. Some of us are lax in attending.
2. We can attend faithfully & encourage others to attend. It will have to be on a one to one basis.

We are not going to experience phenomenal overnight growth. But if we work at it; if we go after people, some will take an interest. The best way to get started: Get interested yourself!

B. We could take note of those who are missing that should be in attendance & contact them. There may be some problem that we can help them with. There may be some discouragement that our concern will alleviate. But don't nag & browbeat. Set a good example, express your interest & concern & allow folks to make up their own mind.

CONCLUSION: Do you want to get more out of the Bible classes & sermons? Would you like to see more people obey the gospel? If so, there are some things that you can do to encourage & promote such. TEACHERS: come alive. Be interested, so that you can interest others. Don't just impart information. Don't just teach material. Teach people.

EVERYONE: attend classes regularly. It is more important than school work, sporting events, going to bed early. Study your lesson ahead of time. Bring your Bible. Pray for the teacher, & for yourself, that your interest may be sparked. Expect to be benefited. And use your influence to get others interested in studying God's word.

La Porte, TX, July 8, 1979

La Porte, TX, June 6, 1982

Exton, PA, February 21, 1988

Shiloh, Mexia, TX, May 17, 1992

Susquehanna, Marietta, PA, November 15, 1998

Hyde Park, PA, September 16, 2001 (meeting)