

## The Battle for the Bible Class

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This past May, I received an email from a young Christian sister in Tennessee with a question about bible class.

“I have always attended the church of Christ and have always been to church where they have Sunday school for the children....A friend of mine attends a church of Christ in another town, they don't have Sunday school for the children as they don't believe it is right. They only have worship services for two hours. Can you let me know if there is anywhere in the bible where it says you cannot have Sunday school? I do know that a woman should be quiet in worship service and I do know there is a verse in the Bible that I can go to to know this. It's just the Sunday school thing I am confused on. Thanks for all your help.”

Then I got a letter from the elders asking me to speak on taking our Bible classes back.

I believe that both issues need to be addressed. Are Bible classes authorized and then taking back our Bible Classes.

The first is an old issue that we don't hear much about anymore. But at one time was very much an issue amongst brethren. We need to know whether or not we are authorized to have Bible Class and also separate Bible Classes.

Can we have Bible Classes? Seems like a silly question doesn't it? But you see there is no place in the New Testament that commands us to have Bible Class. However there is an “office” of teacher mentioned in the scriptures.

Ephesians 4:11” And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and **teachers**.” 1 Corinthians 12 states that not everyone is a teacher, “27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 28 And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly **teachers**, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all **teachers**? are all workers of miracles?”

If there is an office of “teacher” then it is evident that there must be students.

Galatians 6:6 “Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.” Acts 13:1 Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and **teachers**; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

So now we have teachers and students, the next question is where should this teaching take place and how many do we teach at a time and what should we be teaching?

First let's direct our lesson as to when and where the teaching needs to be done. Where is the teaching to take place? Again the Bible does not specifically tell us where the teaching is to take place. Should the teaching take place in a private home? Should it take place in an open tent? Should it take place in a building owned by the church?

Acts 5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

So where and when are we to teach?

We see in this verse that the disciples taught daily in the temple and in houses. The when to teach is mentioned, daily. We too should be teaching daily not just on Sunday and Wednesday. Teaching daily in our homes. We as parents are required to teach.

Ephesians 6: 4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Many will leave all teaching of their children and perhaps their own to those who teach when the church comes together. Should the teaching take place on the Lord's Day only or should it also happen daily?

As the disciples taught in the temple, we would understand that there would be a group to teach all at one time. We also know that the house would not hold as many people and perhaps the teaching would only be with 2 or 3 people.

Acts 18:26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

What we need to understand is whether it be a one on one or a one to 500, we need to teach no matter where the location. We need to teach all ages.

1 John 2:14 I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

Indeed we have numerous examples of teaching taking place at different times and different locations. We are told to go into all the world and teach (Mark 16:15). We have examples of teaching taking place by a riverside (Acts 16:12-15); in prison (Acts 16:25-34); in a synagogue

(Acts 17:17); in the midst of Mars Hill (Acts 17:22); in a castle (Acts 21:37); before the council (Acts 23:1); before Kings (Acts 26:1); in houses (Romans 16:15).

Now that we've established the fact that we have the authority to teach, to teach in different locations and times, we need to know what it is we are to teach.

Again this is something that many will think is a rather silly question. I mean we're coming together to study the bible. . . or are we? That is a question we need to answer because we're seeing more and more people coming together but it isn't to study the Bible, it's to view a film like "Bruce Almighty" and then discuss it or perhaps to watch Mayberry R.F.D. or some other show. Why is this happening and what's more how is it happening?

Perhaps we have no one else to blame but ourselves. If the congregation has elders, it is their responsibility to know what is being taught in each classroom, no matter what the age group. I'm afraid that perhaps many have given up that responsibility. They've placed a "deacon" in charge of the bible class material. The deacon then just orders what is requested without any research into the soundness of the material. We look around and see other congregations using the material and just take it for granted that it has to be scriptural. That is not necessarily the case! Just because what we believe is a sound congregation is using the material does not necessarily make it so.

Maybe the move away from studying the bible started innocently. In trying to make the material easier to understand we started incorporating gimmicks. Songs that started using actions...marching, shouting, clapping...puppets, etc. Then these same children got older and became teachers and they started incorporating these teaching methods in older classes. If we can clap and shout when we're 4 or 5, then why can't we do this when we're 15 or 16? Why we had puppets entertaining us earlier, why can't we have entertainment now? In fact it was reported in the Christian Chronicle that the Altamesa church in Fort Worth, Texas had a full blown musical presentation complete with cowboys. . .the good guys and the bad. Oh but their music was a capella, so I guess that makes it ok? By the way this congregation is known to have a "rockin' VBS." Again if we can have this during our vacation Bible School, where we are supposedly teaching the bible, then why not in our regular bible classes?

Then we wanted classes on marriage relationships. So we started using denominational material. Why not? It was good material (or was it). Many denominational writers had already put together lessons for us and so why not use them in our bible class? I mean it's not like we're actually inviting him to come and teach. Why it's just a video tape. And so the story continues.

We no longer are willing to sit in class and just open up the bible and study. We're not happy with just using bible material, we'd rather be entertained. We can invite our friends to come and meet with us and watch Barney Fife or Sheriff Andy. Why Aunt Bee has some really good messages for us. You may ask what I'm talking about. This is not something I've made up, it is actually

happening in congregations of the Lord's body. No it didn't even start in the denominations this time even though many denominations are using this material. The Twickenham church of Christ in Huntsville, Alabama started this entertainment in June of 1998. Why in one of many interviews, Joey Fann (one of the creators of this study) tells us that he even uses music (instrumental) from the Darlings and serves lemonade in order to make it more relaxing for those who attend. They also end each class with a quote from the show, not the Bible. Then again according to Joey there are many believers in many denominations who enjoy this type of study also.

If Andy and Barney are not entertaining enough we'll just form another group to get together and "study" movies like Bruce Almighty. Of course we'd never call it a "bible study" even though we sit around and discuss it in a bible study sitting. This is taking place in a congregation in Arkansas but they call it a "Think Group".

Our teachers are busy, so we just purchase bible school material from one of "our" bookstores. Why it's safe, isn't it? How many of you have used material from Sweet Company, 21st Century Christian or Gospel Advocate for the youth classes? Did you realize that quite a bit of this "bible school" material has been written by denominational writers and we just put our name on it?

As of 2000, Sweet Company was using material by Group Publishing Incorporated of Loveland, CO. which is filled with Calvinist teaching. 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christian Company is using material from David C. Cook Ministries. Lifelinks in their High School teachers book, Fall, 2000 p.46 teaches, "all humans are born sinner". In 1992 Gospel Advocate bought material from Scripture Press of Wheaton, IL, a Baptist Company. Again are we safe using our "Christian Publishers"?

So the question is what should we use in our teaching? First the Bible tells us what not to teach.

1 Timothy 1:3 As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine. Ephesians 4:14 That we [henceforth] be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, [and] cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.

Easy enough to understand, just don't teach as doctrine those things we don't find in the scriptures. And don't go changing with every wind that blows.

So what is it we are to teach?

Acts 1:1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. . . **teach Jesus** and what he did and taught.

Acts 5:20 Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. . . **teach the words of life.**

Acts 5:42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. . .again **teach and preach Jesus.**

Acts 15:35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. . .**teaching and preaching the word of the Lord.**

Acts 18:11 And he continued [there] a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. . .**teach the Word of God.**

If you're looking for a certain curriculum to help in your study, I can suggest a few. Of course they all will have their own weakness and strength as nothing can compare with just teaching the Bible. Here are a few that I can recommend:

- Bible Study Guide for All Ages – Dr. Donald and Mary Baker  
37 Delsie  
Clarksville, AR 72830  
501.754.2223
- Engraving Heavenly Truths - D.L. Woods Publications  
4625 Virginia Drive  
Olive Branch, MS 38654  
601.895.8437
- Studying Through the Bible - Sain Publications  
217 E Jefferson  
Pulaski, TN 38478  
615.363.6905
- World Video Bible School - 130 Lantana Lane  
Maxwell, TX 78656  
512.398.5211

### Works Cited

[www.barneyfife.com](http://www.barneyfife.com)

Christian Chronicle – August 2004 page 18 and 19

Bible Class Curriculum or Denominational Sunday School? Privately published tract update 2000 by Darrell and Ruth Hanson – Stephenville TX 76401-9765