

WEEKLY BIBLE CLASSES

By Cornelius R. Stam

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HOW TO CONDUCT WEEKLY BIBLE CLASSES EFFECTIVELY

Constructive suggestions on how to start and build up a Bible Class could fill a large book. Assuming that larger Bible Classes already show the results of planning and experience, it is our purpose in this pamphlet to help those who may feel led to form small home Bible Classes, with the hope and prayer that they be blessed and grow to be larger ones.

I. Basic Considerations

1. If you attend a church whose pastor truly proclaims the Pauline revelation and "the gospel of the grace of God", consult him about forming a home Bible Class.
2. It may be that he himself would be the best teacher for your class, or, if he feels otherwise, he should at least be consulted.
3. Never start a Bible class just to oppose a pastor. God will not bless you if you do. He says: "Know [recognize] them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (I Thessalonians 5:12, 13).
4. Unless a women's children's class is contemplated, the teacher should be a man. The Scriptures are clear and emphatic as to this. See especially I Timothy 2:12.

II. How To Start Class

1. It is generally difficult, if not impossible to start a Bible Class single-handed.
2. If this is the only possibility and you do not feel qualified to teach the Word, purchase a tape recorder and see if you can get enough adults (at least six) to join you weekly, so that you can effectively use our Bible lessons in tape Lending Library.
3. Good Bible study books such as THINGS THAT DIFFER (which has questions at the end of each chapter) and EXPLORING THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES have also proved helpful.
4. If you attend a "grace" church your pastor may want to help you get a class started.
5. If not, perhaps you can form a committee of like-minded believers who will really support a weekly Bible class. Often one of these will be readily recognized as qualified to teach, another to conduct the class, etc.

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III. Where To Hold Your Class

1. Advantages of meeting in different homes:
 - a. Creates interest among those attending.
 - b. Helps keep meetings fresh.
 - c. Gives host members a sense of participation.
 - d. Distributes the burden.
2. Advantages of meeting in one home (or other meeting place):
 - a. Fewer problems with hymn books, chairs, speaker's stand, etc.
 - b. Less difficulty with directions.
 - c. Weekly notices not essential.
 - d. Less embarrassing to the timid.

In our experience, classes have shown greater growth when held in the same place weekly, especially if that place is a community recreation hall or some similar place of meetings.

IV. When To Hold The Class

1. Try not to conflict with other meetings in your church or community.
 - a. Women's Bible classes generally do better on weekday mornings or afternoons.
 - b. Men's or mixed Bible classes (excepting church classes) generally do better on weekday nights or Sunday afternoon.
2. Begin your class late enough to give working folk time to get home, eat, dress and travel the distance to your place of meeting. (If an evening service.)
3. Try to close not later than 9:00, or at the latest 9:30. Many Bible class leaders have said: "We had such a good time. We talked until almost midnight." —but their classes have all since died! Encourage a brief time of fellowship after the meeting but it is WISE to observe time limits if you hope to keep your class going and growing.

V. How To Conduct The Class

1. Have one regular teacher.
2. If possible, have one regular chairman, appointed or elected, perhaps annually.
3. Have an alert, faithful secretary.
 - a. To secure the names and addresses of visitors.
 - b. To send out announcements weekly, especially if you meet in different homes from week to week.
 - c. To keep members informed of special events.
 - d. A formal enrollment is not advised.

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4. Have a competent treasurer and regular offerings.
 - a. Perhaps this will be needed to reimburse the speaker for traveling expenses or take care of other expenses. Always have good Bible study literature available.
 - b. It is always well to have some project to get the message out to others. The class will prosper spiritually if its members give as well as receive.
5. Have a host, hostess or both who are on their toes to greet those who attend.
 - a. To take care of wraps, etc.
 - b. To specially welcome newcomers and those who have been absent.
 - c. To take care of ventilation.
 - d. To be ready with more chairs.
6. Have several take part at each service if possible.

VI. Suggested Order of Service

1. A few awakening hymns if circumstances indicate.
2. Have leader call for prayer by someone he knows will not be embarrassed.
3. Announcements and introduction of speaker.
4. Message.
5. Brief question period if teacher is qualified. Set a firm time limit for this.
6. Bible study assignment for next week—but do not embarrass next audience by insisting on answers.

VII. Cautions

1. Keep services fresh and informal, but not too informal.
2. Don't scold or chide absentees; they have not pledged regularity.
3. Provide sensible ventilation.
4. Do not over-heat in winter.
5. Occasionally refreshments may be served.
6. Finally, don't allow the class to deteriorate into a mere discussion period. "Doth not nature itself teach you..."—in addition to the Scriptures—that God has ordained order, rank and leadership in the Church? Let's leave the Forum to the Athenians. This method usually generates much heat but little light; it tends to confuse rather than edify.

May the Lord bless you in your desire to further the "Gospel of the Grace of God".

—Affectionately,

C.R.Stam