

• **Ephesians 4:11,12** teach us an extremely important principles concerning the church and its work. We recognize from these verses that one of the church's works and responsibilities is to build up the body of Christ, which we know to be the members of the church. We commonly refer to this as edification, instruction, or teaching, and this is not the only time Paul encouraged groups of Christians to build one another up. Numerous times throughout Romans and following epistles we read of Paul encouraging the teaching and building up of one another. Further evidence for the need and the importance of teaching found in this context is the numerous positions of leadership that are listed in **v. 11** and specifically the position of teachers. Obviously, we understand that teachers are to teach, but these other positions of leadership have the responsibility to teach, as well. The Apostles were to teach of this new Gospel (**II Thess. 2:15**). Evangelists are charged with the duty of preaching the Word (**II Tim. 4:2**). Finally, one of the characteristics of a shepherd within the Lord's church is the ability to teach (**I Tim. 3:2**). We must conclude that teaching is a very important function of the church.

• Churches use different methods to accomplish this goal of teaching, but perhaps the most predominant method is the use of Bible Classes. Bible classes are crucially important to the strength of a local church, and it is good for us to take the time occasionally to discuss why we do some of the things that we do (in this case bible classes) and to talk about what can make them either a failure or a success. So open your bibles and let's spend our time, this evening, discussing bible classes.

I. Why Bible Classes Matter

A. The Bible matters.

1. God matters. He is the key to eternal life.
2. The Bible is God's will for us.

B. We are to know the Bible.

1. We need to know what God desires for us. (**Col. 1:9-12**)
2. Bible classes provide a means of instruction and discussion. (**Acts 17:1-3; result v.4**)
3. God's people have always been charged with the responsibility to know His will.
 - a) It was true under the Old Law. (**Deut. 6:4-9; 31:12,13**)
 - b) It is just as true under the New Law. (**II Tim. 2:15; Acts 17:11**)

C. The Bible deserves attention and respect.

1. The Bible deserves our attention because it can make the Christian complete. (**II Tim. 3:16,17**)
2. The Children of Israel gave the reading of the Law the utmost respect. (**Neh. 8:5,6**)
3. Respect is deserved because the Word is life to the reader. (**Deut. 32:44-47**)

II. Why Bible Classes Fail

A. There is a lack of preparation.

1. Lack of preparation all around can ruin the effectiveness of a Bible class.
 - a) Class coordinators: There is no flow in the material, material is no good, teachers are picked at the last minute, there is no training for teachers they are just thrown to the wolves, or no prior planning.
 - b) Teachers: No or little preparation before class (no study or questions written or given). No training as a teacher so he/she has no idea about how to handle a classroom setting. Not every person is automatically equipped to be a teacher (**II Tim. 2:2**) so there must be training and preparation. *"No matter what material is being used, no matter what system of teaching a congregation is using, each individual teacher makes the system either succeed or fail in his classroom, based upon his degree of preparedness"* (Bob Waldron, Gospel preacher in FL)
 - c) Students: Take no time studying lesson (busy schedules) before class and expects teacher to do all the work. Parents don't put an emphasis on getting Bible class work done and understood. (Not a priority)
2. Spiritual teaching must begin in the home.
 - a) Contrary to popular belief, the church should not be a child's only source of spiritual nourishment.
 - b) Parents play the key role in helping a child to grow in spiritual knowledge and faith. (**Deut. 6:7-9; Eph. 6:4**)

B. There is a lack of focus.

1. Bible class is a wonderful time to get away from the world and the Bible/spiritual things should be at the forefront of our mind!
2. Instead of focusing on the text, we chat with our neighbor about nonspiritual things, mess with our phones or tablets, or just let our minds wander into a daze.
3. We are late to class and it causes us to become distracted.
4. Point of the lesson is never truly understood.
5. This is not acceptable! Teachers in schools would not allow this to happen, but for whatever reason we think that it's okay since it's just Bible class. Lack of focus will quickly make class a failure.

C. There is a lack of desire for the Book.

1. Lack of focus may very well be a symptom of a lack of desire.
2. Lack of attendance shows a lack of desire.
3. The participant might be more interested in some speculation or opinions. **(II Tim. 2:16-18)**
4. A lack of desire for the Truth of God's word will make a Bible class an absolute failure.

III. **Why Bible Classes Succeed**

A. There is preparation prior to class.

1. Class coordinator:
 - a) Plans classes and picks teachers in advance and prepares classes that build on one another.
 - b) Material is solid and leads the class to the Biblical text.
 - c) Gets teachers any additional materials that might be needed for class.
 - d) There are classes designed to help teachers grow so they can be more effective.
2. Teachers:
 - a) Engage in serious study for their classes far ahead of actual class time.
 - b) If they have questions about the subject matter, they seek out answers.
 - c) If writing their own material, they get it to the students far ahead of time so they can prepare.
 - d) If they know they'll be out they plan a substitute teacher.
3. Students:
 - a) Lessons have been studied and any questions answered before class.
 - b) Parents take the initiative with their children to make sure they are doing lessons and asking if they have any problems understanding any material.
 - c) Parents are constantly feeding their children spiritual food and not simply rely on the teacher.

B. The teacher and students are on task.

- A. The Israelites were willing to stand from morning to midday while being attentive to the Law being read. **(Neh.8:2,3)**
- B. Teachers and students come to class ready to get into the Word of God and see what truths they can learn during that class period.
- C. Comments and questions should be said to help further the study and not detract from it.

C. The teacher and students hunger and thirst for the Truth of God's Word.

1. The desired result of a Bible class is for teachers and students alike to grow in spiritual knowledge.
2. This happens when there is a tremendous desire by both parties to want to learn the subject matter.
3. Through doing this, the progress of all involved will be clearly evident. **(I Tim. 4:13ff)**
4. Those who greatly desire the Word will be in Bible class encouraging one another in learning.
5. Jesus said that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness would be filled **(Matt. 5:6)** and the one that seeks the will of God with an open heart would find **(Matt.7:7)**. God wants to bless us, especially spiritually!

Why do we take the time to consider our Bible classes? We do this because we want to have the results we see back in our beginning text of **Eph. 4:13-16**. We want this church to be built up strongly, speaking the truth in love, and not being tossed about by false doctrines and trickeries of men. May God help us to prepare accordingly and do everything we can to have a successful Bible class program that will help build up the members of the church here at Pleasant Plains.