

BIBLE CLASS TEACHERS

By Paul C. Keller

Many reasons can be suggested as to why teaching the Bible is important. Jesus Christ has authorized the teaching of His truth to others (Matt. 28:18-20), and such is the continuing obligation of Christians. (2 Tim. 2:2) Through the medium of teaching God draws men to His Son. (John 6:44-45) The word of God furnishes the man of God completely unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16,17), and is essential to spiritual growth and development. (1 Peter 2:1-2; Heb. 5:12-14) To be a teacher of the word of God involves grave responsibilities, presents untold possibilities, and has consequences eternal. None should regard it lightly.

Our Bible classes are important. They do not constitute a separate organization but are simply an arrangement used by the church to teach the truth. The church needs to be concerned about the faithfulness of every teacher and the effectiveness of every class. The teaching of the Bible must ever be the purpose for its existence. The work of teaching the word of God is too important, and too far-reaching for either good or bad, to permit haphazard, careless, thoughtless, prayerless selection of teachers. The church ought to be as much concerned about the teachers and the teaching done in the Bible classes as they are about the teachers and teaching done in the pulpit. Every person who would be a teacher needs to be keenly aware to the sobering responsibilities involved, and the possible consequences to himself as well as to others. (Cf. 1 Tim. 4:16; Read James 3:1). Ponder seriously what is involved.

The purpose of the class (i.e., to teach the Bible) must necessarily become the purpose of the teacher IF that teacher is to do an effective, faithful work. The motive for doing a thing goes far in determining the results of the thing done, and one may well ask, "**Why** am I a teacher?" It may be that one does not have the best motive. One may be a teacher because of the desire for the prestige or prominence it gives. He (she) may want a good-sized class, but if promotions or other circumstances reduce the number in attendance, will he then be anxious to "give it up" to someone else? Unless study of the scriptures and growth in spiritual maturity causes one to outgrow this unworthy motive such persons will not be the kind of teacher needed. Teaching the Bible is not the place to seek "the praise of men," either in the pulpit or the classroom. Another may become a teacher simply because "no one else would do it."

If you became a teacher under such circumstances, do not be discouraged. You can still become one of the very best teachers---by study, prayer and effort, thus cultivating a love for the work and improving your effectiveness. Appreciate the fact that a great trust has been placed in you and strive to be worthy of that confidence. There is no greater work than teaching God's word. Let us be conscious of the nature and importance of it. Be alarmed if you desire to be excused from this work, or if you do not consider this work reverently, in the fear of God. Be alarmed if you do not love your work, and do not like to study and prepare well for your class---and if you do not derive joy from seeing the

increasing knowledge, and awareness of responsibilities, on the part of those you teach. Love for teaching leads to faithfulness. Faithfulness leads to success.

The importance of the work demands that one be qualified to do it. To say that one must be qualified does not mean that one must be perfect, but it does mean there are certain basic qualities which should characterize every teacher. One may begin teaching while possessing these qualifications to a degree---and GROW, through dedicated effort, study, prayer and experience. For your consideration, we suggest some qualities needed. A Bible class teacher should be:

1. ***A genuine Christian.*** Someone has said, "The life of the teacher is the life of his teaching." What we *are* has more influence than what we *say*. A good man or a good woman may not be a good teacher, but a bad one can never be a good teacher. (Cf. Rom. 2:21-24) One who drinks liquor (even when it is called "social drinking"), dances, dresses immodestly, uses vulgar speech, goes to questionable places, engages in questionable practices, or who carelessly slights various services of the church, etc. should not be used as a teacher. All of the knowledge, culture, training, and skill in teaching that can be crowded into a person CANNOT JUSTIFY the use of such a person as a teacher UNLESS he is a genuine Christian. It is far better to use an awkward, untrained, unskilled person who is conscientiously trying to live the life of a Christian than to use one who has all the qualifications EXCEPT this one.

2. ***Sound in doctrine.*** (Cf. Titus 2:1, 8; 2 Tim 1:13) One should be able to "handle aright the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), understand the proper divisions of the scriptures, know the fundamental principles of truth, the Bible plan salvation and the scriptures where it can be read, etc. A teacher of any class should have a reputation for soundness--and this would include a right attitude toward all error, i.e., opposition to it. Soundness means adhering to the scriptures (1 Pet. 4:11), and opposing everything in religion not taught in the Bible.

3. ***Frank and sincere.*** There is no disgrace in saying, "I don't know." If one doesn't know the answer to a question, it is far better to admit it, and then promise to learn the answer---if possible. It is better to do this than attempt an answer when one does not know, for he probably would not teach the truth. Students---of all ages---are not so easily deceived in this matter. They lose respect for a teacher and his sincerity if he is not frank in his dealings with them.

4. ***Studious.*** One should not merely study for the lesson to be taught but should be a consistent student of the word of God. He should ever be seeking to learn more of God's revealed truth.

5. ***One who prepares well for class.*** He owes this to himself and to those he would teach. This includes more than the material provided in the lesson helps. It is poor teaching when the teacher does not know more than is contained in the lesson book. A teacher should not be satisfied just to "get by." If pupils see that the teacher does not

know much about the lesson they lose respect for his service, which means his usefulness with them is nearly nonexistent. Full knowledge of the subject will gain the respect of those in the class, and will give life and solidity to the teaching effort. Teachers should have access to certain helps, such as Bible Dictionaries, Concordance, Maps, Commentaries, etc. One should build a personal library of good books---adding a book from time to time, as one is able to do so, will be of great benefit.

6. **Dependable.** Being a teacher of a class involves responsibilities. The class does not exist merely to gratify the whims, or satisfy the convenience, of the teacher, but to provide opportunity to teach the word of God. A teacher should make every reasonable effort to be present every time---and to be *on time*, prepared, and eager to teach. If one must be absent, ample advance notice should be given so that another person may make the needed preparation to teach the class. Frequent and unnecessary absences, failure to inform in advance those who need to know (when it is possible to do so), tardiness, careless and slipshod handling of one's responsibilities is out of place on the part of one who would be a teacher of God's word.

7. **Prayer.** (Cf. Lk. 18:1; 1 Thess. 5:17) Prayer is encouraged so much in the scriptures, both by precept and example, that this need not be argued at length. Someone has said, "The teacher who neglects prayer seems to expect he can do God's work without God's help."

8. **One who has a love for souls.** It is well for a teacher to give attention to getting more people to attend the class, but he needs to realize that the chief aim of his work is to win souls for Christ.

9. **Cooperative.** "Striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27) should be the practice of all Christians. Teachers ought to set a good example in this respect. They should be among the first and most consistent in encouraging the scriptural work of the church. Carping criticism is out of place on the part of Bible class teachers, nor should they encourage such on the part of others. We are not suggesting the compromising of any principle of truth, but we do insist that teachers ought to use their influence "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Teachers should attend ALL the services of the church. They should encourage others to do so. They can be---and ought to be---of .great value in building consistent attendance to gospel meetings, etc. They should be good examples in this respect.

10. **Always growing.** None of us have developed as much as we could. One should not become "satisfied," but ever press forward. (Cf. Phil 3:14)

Yes, teaching the word of God is an important work. Let those of us who undertake it prepare ourselves well and do our work faithfully. And let all of us be thankful for faithful teachers of the word, express our appreciation to them, encourage them, and pray for them. May God bless us to a more faithful, fruitful work together.

--- Pause-Ponder-And-Profite