

DECEMBER 1984

THE REFLECTOR

A Monthly Publication Of The Fultondale Church Of Christ

WE ARE LATE AGAIN

As you can see, we are behind schedule again with the bulletin. If we get many more labor-saving devices around here, such as copier, computer, etc., we may be able to get the paper out within a year or so of its due date.

The last few part of 1984 has been good to us. We, as a church, have had some good things happen. Some have been **restored** recently. Our **attendance** and **contribution** figures have been good lately.

Personally, it has good to work with some of the young preachers we have come to love so much in various efforts over the past two or three months. We enjoyed moderating for our son in his debate in Anniston. We think it did good, even allowing for our personal bias toward the debater.

Anyway, all of this has gotten us behind with our writing and work on this paper. We hope to be back on schedule within the month. Bear with us please, we hope to improve The Reflector in the coming year. Our mailing list continues to grow and we appreciate all the mail that we receive, even though we do not get around to answering each letter. Thanks again for your kind **words** -- even your criticisms.

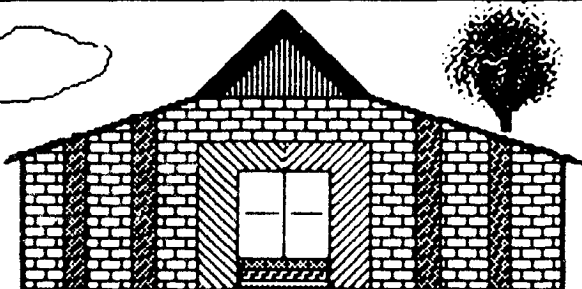
BIBLE CLASSES INSIDE PAGES

We've thought for some time that we would write something about Bible classes.

We believe that they have a right to exist and are very helpful in the edification of the church. We try, here at Fultondale to give a lot of emphasis to this good work.

In this issue, we a reproducing an article that appeared in **Truth Magazine** some time ago, we hope it will be helpful to you in considering for yourself and in order to teach others about the Scriptural authority for Bible classes.

We firmly believe that brethren deny themselves of a very useful and scriptural teaching arrangement when they either do not have classes or they give so little attention to the classes that they might as well not have them. Please give the article careful consideration.



TIMES OF OUR SERVICES

Sundays:

Bible Classes 9:45 A.M.

Worship 10:45 A.M.

Worship 6:00 P.M.

Wednesdays:

Bible Classes 7:30 P.M.

A Defense of Bible Classes

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It is not my purpose in this article to set forth something new on the above caption. However, since I once violently opposed the class method of teaching the Bible, I thought that I might set forth some things worthwhile for those who have not done a great deal of study upon this important subject. I preached for a number of years that it was sinful to teach the Bible in classes and to use women as teachers in such classes. When I began to realize that the class method had many merits and was a very effective way to teach the word of God, I began a diligent search for the truth with regard to the scripturalness of it. This investigation lasted for some two years, as I discussed the subject with preachers on both sides of the issue and studied debates that had been written about it. I had to know what was right in the sight of God! My findings led me to take a stand for the class method of teaching. Since my change, I have continued to study and think on these matters. I think that I understand the way my non-Bible class brethren feel; for I once saw these things as they see them. I know a great many of the preaching brethren among them personally and have a tender feeling for them.

Generic and Specific Authority

First of all, let us observe that Bible authority is of two kinds: *Generic* and *Specific*. *Generic includes*, while *Specific excludes*. Perhaps the best example of this is seen in the command to "assemble" and "break bread" (Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7). As to the *hour* that we should meet, since it is not stated in the command, this must be determined by whatever is expedient. We then apply the rule of *expediency*. We are at liberty to set any hour, providing it is still on the first day of the week. You also remember that we must establish Bible authority either by (1) a direct command, (2) an approved example, or (3) a necessary inference. Please notice again in the Lord's Supper:

Its Observance (Direct command): "This do in remembrance of me." (1 Cor. 11:25.)

Which Day (Approved example): "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread. . . ." (Acts 20:7.)

Frequency of its Observance (Necessary inference): "And upon the first day of the week." (Acts 20:7.) From this we *necessarily infer* that the observance of the Lord's Supper is to be as regular as the "first day of the week" comes. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8) meant *every sabbath*; so "the first day of the week" means *every such day*.

We observe also that the apostles were commanded to "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Notice please, how the apostles carried out this command to

"teach." In Acts 5:42 we read, ". . . every day in the temple and at home, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ." Here, the apostles are carrying out the great commission by teaching "in the temple" and "at home." In Acts 20:20, Paul says, "And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house." Here again is a case where the great commission is being carried out. Paul taught "publicly" and "from house to house." You will observe that the great commission (command) was generic. Therefore, the apostles were at liberty to choose the methods mentioned in the preceding passages, or to work out those arrangements in order to expedite the command.

Dividing into Classes

What about this dividing of people into classes or groups for the purpose of teaching them the Bible? It is strange to me that brethren will raise their voices in opposition to the class arrangement, yet will recognize generic authority in other things. Look at the Lord's Supper again as an example. We are commanded to "drink the cup" (1 Cor. 11:23-27). We are not so ignorant as to think the apostle Paul was talking about the container. How could one partake of the container? In this passage the "cup" refers to the "contents." Hence, he does not specify the number of containers that may be used. We partake of the "fruit of the vine" from whatever number of containers that are required in order to expedite the command to "drink the cup." Why do brethren see that this is a generic command, but are not able to recognize that the command to "teach" is also generic? Can't you see the parallel? I think you can.

Since the command to teach is generic (in other words, the detailed arrangements are not set forth in the command), we are therefore free to use whatever arrangement that might be available to us in order to expedite the command to teach others. We recognize that it is better to divide people into certain classes or groups, respecting the various ages, experiences, etc. Our public schools would not accomplish much by keeping all ages together in the same room or group in teaching secular subjects, neither will we do a good job of teaching the Bible if we fail to respect the various ages. There is nothing in the word of God forbidding this. Often brethren will have a "wives" class and a "husbands" class, older men's class, an older women's class, a "younger women's class," etc. Friend, the New Testament recognizes various groups or classes into which people naturally are divided. In Col. 3:18-25 and Eph. 5:22-6:9 we find Paul recognizing different groups: "wives," "husbands," "children," "servants," and "masters." In Titus 2:1-10 "aged men," "aged women," "young women," and "young men" are recognized. Paul taught these different groups or classes of individuals. It would be well just here to notice Acts 5:20-25, where it is recorded that "men" (plural) were standing and teaching the people. Hence, more than one teacher may teach at one time. Many non-class brethren will counter with 1 Cor. 14:31, saying that it is unscriptural for more than one to teach at a time. Do you think these in Acts 5:20-25 were violating 1 Cor. 14:31? I do not, for I do not believe that there is a single contradiction to be found in the Word of the Living God. Thus, I know that they must have had the people divided into classes, avoiding the confusion of more than one teacher teaching the same group or class at the

same time. The command to teach is generic, just as "drink the cup" is a generic command. The methods used, whatever they might be, are necessary to the carrying out of the command.

Dividing the Assembly

Often those who oppose the class method of teaching fail to recognize what the church is. They maintain that various classes constitute "church" assemblies; therefore, their chief objection to the classes is that it "divides the assembly." But friend, the word "church" is used several times when it does not mean *an assembly*. For example in 1 Cor. 14:23 Paul said, "If therefore the whole church be assembled together . . ." (ASV). Since Paul speaks of the church being assembled, the word *church* in this instance refers to the people of God without regard to the assembly. However, if any group of Christians anywhere who are met for any given purpose, constitutes the "church" assembly, then a woman cannot teach a group of younger women in her home for if she does, according to the non-class brethren, she is speaking in the assembly! Furthermore, if teaching the Bible in groups according to age levels is dividing the church, then the non-class brethren would have to refuse to take one who has confessed Christ and is to be baptized apart from the assembly and teach him anything because this would be dividing the church (assembly), according to their own position. God requires that we use the most effective methods available for the propagation of His word. Brethren who oppose divided classes should be made to see this principle and to realize that they are inconsistent in that they practice that which they themselves oppose.

About Women Teachers

A careful study of Acts 2:18; 18:26; 21:9; 2 Tim. 2:2; Tit. 2:3,4 should be sufficient to show that women may scripturally teach the word of God. Acts 2:18 shows that there were to be prophetesses (teachers); while Acts 21:9 tells of Philip's four virgin daughters who prophesied (taught); and Acts 18:26 is an example of a woman being included as a teacher of the word of God. Now, let me call your attention to 2 Tim. 2:2, which says, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." The word for "men" is taken from the Greek word *anthropos*, which Thayer says is used univ., with reference to the genus or nature, without distinction of sex, *a human being, whether male or female.* (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 46). Thus, it should be clear to all that a woman is to be a teacher of the word of God. Titus 2:3,4 shows that the older women are to teach the younger women.

Having pointed out the authorization for women to teach, now let us observe the limitations placed upon her in this work of teaching. Turn with me now to 1 Tim. 2:11,12. "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence." Both times that this word "silence" is used, it is the same word that is translated "quietness" in 2 Thess. 3:12, and is indicative of *spirit or disposition*. This passage does not forbid a woman to speak. Let it also be observed that this passage is not limited to a church "assembly." Notice the context: verse 9 is understood as

general instruction about "modest apparel," not to be worn just in the "assembly." Verse 15 speaks of "faith and charity and holiness," etc. In between is our passage. Why, then must we limit verses 11 and 12 to a church "assembly"?

Well, then what does 1 Tim. 2:11, 12 mean? The trouble that most non-Bible class people have in trying to understand this passage is that they have not properly studied verse 12 along with other passages. But let us notice a parallel passage: Acts 4:18 tells of Peter and John, that they were charged "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." The grammatical construction of this verse is the same as that in 1 Tim. 2:12. Were the apostles forbidden to speak and teach? No! They were forbidden to teach "in the name of Jesus." The prohibition of their teaching and speaking was qualified by the phrase, "in the name of Jesus." What then is the prohibition in 1 Tim. 2:12? She is not to *teach and have authority over the man*. That is the prohibition of 1 Tim. 2:11, 12. We know then, that when Paul said in Tit. 2:15, "These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority" that he did not intend that women engage in a public proclamation of the word of God; for this would not be in keeping with her *spirit or disposition*. That which Paul urges upon Titus is a work that is done with all "authority." The woman's work in teaching and learning situations must be done in "quietness" of disposition, having respect for the man over her. This leaves women free to teach children, or other women, or to participate in studies with men as long as they observe and function within the sphere God assigned them. 1 Tim. 2:11, 12 does not teach that it is wrong for women to teach, for this would conflict with a number of passages: Tit. 2:3; 2 Tim. 2:2, etc. Neither does it teach that it is wrong for a woman to teach a man, for this would conflict with Acts 18:26. And 1 Tim. 2:11, 12 does not teach that a woman cannot exercise authority, for there are situations where she has authority, as in 1 Tim. 5:14 for example.

Another passage used by non-Bible class advocates is 1 Cor. 14:34. "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law." Many make a misapplication of this passage. It is my firm conviction that if the non-Bible class people would stop and face up to the fact that it would be impossible for the church today to be governed by this 14th chapter, much of the difficulty would be removed in determining whether or not a woman can scripturally teach a Bible class. This was my main problem before I made my change. Please observe that this chapter has to do with a service where spiritual gifts are in operation. Since we have no spiritual gifts today, we cannot be governed by *everything* that is in 1 Cor. 14. Notice what this chapter demands: (1) No more than three speakers in one meeting; (2) judging prophets; (3) the one speaking to stop to permit another to speak; (4) women to remain completely silent (not making a sound); (5) wives of prophets to ask their husbands any questions they have when they get home.

Even the non-Bible class people do not regulate their services by this chapter. Please notice the construction of 1 Cor. 14:34: "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is *not* permitted unto them to speak; *but* they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law."

Now notice that the word "*but*" qualifies the "*not*" in this verse. It is the same as 1 Cor. 1:17: "For Christ sent me *not* to baptize, *but* to preach the gospel." Does this verse mean that Paul was not to baptize? If so, he did wrong when he baptized Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:14,16). Verse 13 shows that he was not to baptize "in the name of Paul." Here again the "not" is qualified by the "but." Another parallel passage is John 6:27. Jesus said, "Labor *not* for the meat which perisheth, *but* for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." Does this mean that the people were not to work at secular work in order to have food to eat? Certainly not! Here, he was simply emphasizing spiritual things in contrast with physical things. Again the "not" is qualified by the "but." We must not ignore qualifications in the Scriptures. Thus, friend, 1 Cor. 14:34 does not forbid a woman to speak; but she *is* forbidden to speak *beyond the point of obedience*. The women here were the wives of the prophets. They needed this admonition, because of the confusion caused by the prophets "showing off" their spiritual gifts. But if you ignored qualifications, 1 Cor. 14:28 would forbid a *man* to speak in the assembly. We know that the "silence" must be qualified, for a woman *sings* in the assembly," at which time she "teaches and admonishes" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Now there are some abiding principles in 1 Cor. 14. Notice them: (1) "Let all things be done unto edifying" v. 26; (2) "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" v. 33; (3) "Let all things be done decently and in order" v. 40.

Inconsistencies

Let me tell you of some of the inconsistencies of these

people. They often meet in someone's home and sing. According to their own argumentation this would constitute an assembly of saints. In such assemblies the women often do most of the speaking. They seem to think that, just because it is in a private home, they have a right to let the women speak, even to the point of permitting their women to teach. Now I know that they do this, for I have been there. In fact, it is often in such gatherings (assemblies) as this that they hash over the class system of teaching and talk about it being a sin for a woman to teach a Bible class. After I changed and accepted the class method of teaching, I was asked to meet in a private home with some of these non-class people to discuss a Bible subject. One woman did so much of the speaking, that it was hard for me to get in a single word. She was trying to teach me (a man) in an assembly of saints. They would not permit this if it should be called a Bible class. They gather, usually about 10:30 or 11:00 a.m. on Sunday morning for worship. While waiting for time to begin their worship, the ladies visit and carry on conversation (speak). Then, when it is time to begin, a song leader gets up and calls out a number. The women consider that they are from that second until the assembly is dismissed to be perfectly silent. That is the way they are "silent in the church."

Now, dear reader, can you think of anything in the New Testament that forbids women to teach in Bible classes? And in the light of the fact that teaching the Bible is a responsibility of the local church (1 Tim. 3:15), we need to realize this responsibility and see to it that the local church where we work and worship is carrying out this God-given obligation.

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