

## VALUING OUR BIBLE CLASSES

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How do you tell what is really important to a person or to a group of people? By noting the time, attention, and resources they give to it! If something is important to us, if we really care about it, we will make an investment in it - of ourselves - of our energy - of our attention - of our time -of our effort -of our resources. (Think about the golfer and the fisherman.) The same can be said for congregations. We can tell how much they value Christian education and how important they see the congregation's Bible classes to be by how much planning, attention, and resources they devote to them.

Why have a congregational Bible program? What is the purpose of the division of classes, the facilities, the special literature? Think with me about this.

A person can come to Jesus only as drawn by the Father (John 6:44,45). How is this done? Not by some better-felt-than-told experience, or vision in the night, but by hearing and learning - that is what Jesus said! The teaching - learning process is essential to salvation! Faith is essential to salvation in Christ (Romans 1:16) but faith comes about through hearing the word of Christ (Romans 10:17).

We teach to bring to Christ. We teach to edify. We teach to help those who belong to Christ to (observe, obey) all that Christ commanded (Matthew 28:18-20). Paul said that the gospel had been entrusted to us (2 Tim. 1:14), but not for hoarding! We are to grasp the truth and then help others to grasp it (2 Tim. 2:2). The true "apostolic succession" is a message ("what you have heard") passed on down through the generations. Each Christian is a link between two generations. It takes only one generation for apostasy to develop! What has taken generations to achieve can be lost within one lifetime.

The death knell of the church - the death knell of Christianity - as a vital force in the world, will be sounded when we no longer care about and teach God's word.

We have a society morally adrift. That is what happens when there is no knowledge of the will of God in the land, with no standard of morality. And in the church, in our families, we are not living in a vacuum! We are touched by what flows around us. If ever the knowledge of how to live was needed, it is now. And we have that knowledge - a life - transforming knowledge - in God's word, the Scriptures. Hosea 4:1- 6 should not be missed by us!

The teaching of the Bible is particularly important because we are dealing with eternal matters! The Final Exam could come any day, and we need to help one another be prepared for it! For "we will all stand before the judgment seat of God" (Romans 14:10). As much as we value good English teachers, math teachers, and business teachers, they deal with lesser matters. We know that Bible teachers deal with the very essence of life and even eternity.

Our congregational Bible class program is divided into classes because classes can best relate to the needs and abilities of the students. We know that the 3 - year-old is best taught at his level and would not grasp much of teaching aimed at 16-year-olds. With classes we can relate to maturity levels and even to spiritual knowledge levels (with classes for new converts, for example).

There is a fellowship opportunity created by class situations. An opportunity to get to know people through class interaction and discussion. Classes in some situations provide a chance to discuss and respond to needs of class members, etc., in a way that the assembly does not easily accommodate.

There is an opportunity through classes for other followers of Jesus to support us in the training of our children, and to reinforce the lessons we have been teaching at home. "Support" and "reinforce" are operative words in the above sentence, for that is what parents should be seeking from the church. That is because children do not just learn in formal situations, but are continually learning. All of life is a learning centre for them and especially so the home. The church can, however, reinforce, support, and supplement the work of parents.

We are responsible, as individuals, for our study of God's Word. We are responsible for knowing what God has to say about what we should believe and how we should live. And we are responsible for the teaching of our children. They are a precious trust given to us. We need to be instructing them in the things of God, so they will not grow up ignorant of God's will, God's love, God's grace, and God's provision for their salvation.

How thankful we should be that others share these responsibilities! How thankful we should be that we can gather with others to study God's word! How thankful we should be that there are special class situations provided by the congregation so that we are assisted in the teaching of our children!

But are we fully grasping the opportunities these classes provide? Are we and our children regularly present for classes Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings, for example, to benefit from the study of God's Word with others?

Thank God for faithful men and women who teach God's Word in our congregational Bible classes! May their numbers increase! And may we all seek the spiritual nourishment of God's Word, as newborn babies seek, milk, that we may grow into salvation (I Peter 2:2).

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