

4 Churches Teach the Truth

All through the ages great minds have searched for truth. They came short of finding it, however, if they did not look for it in the right place. Jesus said in prayer to God the Father, “Your word is truth” (John 17:17).

The Bible is a marvelous book, a volume of 66 books written over a span of about 1,600 years. Churches have the task of teaching truths from this tremendous work. More has been written about the Bible than about any other book as truths of the Bible are inexhaustible.

As you get into a lifelong study of the Bible, you will discover gold, silver, and precious stones in the mines of Scripture. It contains treasure worth digging for!

The Plan

- A. Teaching: A Ministry Gift
- B. Church Schools
- C. Bible Study Classes
- D. Lay Leaders' Training

The Goals

1. Discuss the ministry gift of teachers.
2. Describe the varieties of church school and Bible study classes.
3. State the advantages of Bible study classes.
4. Identify the purpose of lay leaders' training classes.

A. TEACHING: A MINISTRY GIFT

Goal 1. Discuss the ministry gift of teachers.

In Lesson 2 you were introduced to nine gifts of the Holy Spirit. In addition to gifts of the Holy Spirit, God has given ministry gifts for the building up of His church. "In the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers" (1 Corinthians 12:28).

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. (Ephesians 4:11–12)

In 1 Corinthians 12 the teaching ministry is rated as very important. Where Paul actually numbers the ministry gifts, the work of a teacher comes third. Some Bible scholars place the combined gifts of pastor and teacher on the same level.

Mary and Timothy enjoy the Bible class for young adults. Their teacher, Andrew Jay, gives well-prepared lessons and encourages everyone to participate in their lively discussions.

Timothy asks him, “What is the difference between the ministry of a pastor and that of a teacher?”

“What do you think?” asks Mr. Jay.

Timothy ponders, then replies, “It seems to me that there is a close relationship. Both a pastor and a teacher should study the Bible and pray in preparation for what they present. Maybe the main difference is in the manner in which it is given.”

“Yes,” says Mr. Jay. “Perhaps we could put it this way. All pastors must also be teachers. They must study hard and be able to teach, to instruct others, and to inspire them with their sermons. All teachers, however, are not pastors. As you see, I’m a teacher, but not a pastor. I do not preach publicly or pastor a church. Both pastors and teachers have their distinct functions or ministries in the church.”

You learned in Lesson 3 that preaching is proclaiming a message to persuade listeners to respond in repentance and dedication. Teaching is explaining truth with the purpose of informing people, to help them grow spiritually.

Christ has placed teachers in the church. A person with a gift of teaching needs to develop that gift. A good teacher, like an accomplished violinist, is not born as such. Teachers must receive training; they must study if they are to know their subjects well. They shoulder the great responsibility of teaching God’s Word to people who, in turn, teach and train others. This is why the apostle Paul encouraged Timothy:

The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.
(2 Timothy 2:2)

Earlier he had written, “Of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher” (2 Timothy 1:11). Here

he placed his offices of apostle and teacher together. Paul the apostle became a teacher of teachers.

Application

- 1** Choose the best answer of the two given in parentheses and write it in the blank.
- a)** Teaching is God’s Word.
(proclaiming/explaining)
- b)** Preaching is God’s Word.
(proclaiming/explaining)
- c)** Paul lists third on the list of ministry gifts.
(preaching/teaching)
-

B. CHURCH SCHOOLS

Goal 2. Describe the varieties of church school and Bible study classes.

Mary and Timothy represent millions of believers who participate in church schools. Those meeting on Sunday are usually called Sunday Schools. The first Sunday School was held in England in 1780, where Robert Raikes noticed the wild behavior of children on Sundays when they were free from their work in the factories. He invited many of them to a school where he had arranged for some women to teach them reading and church doctrine. Once he encouraged poor, hungry children to come by offering cooked potatoes.

His work with the children was so successful that the district in which he worked was described as “quite a heaven upon Sundays!” The idea of Sunday School spread rapidly to other parts of the world. These schools play an important role in fulfilling Christ’s command to go everywhere and make disciples.

Though Sunday School began with children, all ages need this training. Some churches have activities and classes for every age and type of student. Many churches now prefer to

use the term *church school* because classes may be held at times other than on Sundays, for example, on Saturday or on weekday evenings.

Church school facilities may be elaborate with a complete building primarily for this purpose. Each class has its own meeting place with adequate teaching aids and materials. Other church schools have little or no equipment. Students may be seated on the ground in the shade of trees or other shelter. Perhaps no literature is available. But some teachers are able to do amazingly well with so little! Whatever the facilities may be, teachers must have a message and be trained to teach it.

Vacation Bible School (VBS), a branch of the church school ministry, is usually conducted for a week or two when children are free from their regular schooling. VBS may be held in the home community, in another building, or at a camp.

Some churches have developed Christian schools offering primary and even secondary education. Others have classes for adults who want to learn to read. These classes use the Bible as one of their textbooks.

Whatever avenue they choose, the main function of church schools is to provide Christian education for all. Public preaching of God's Word is not enough. Our children and young people especially need Bible teaching. A strong church school will help make a strong local church.

Application

- 2** Circle the letter in front of each true statement.
- a)** Church schools are only for children.
- b)** Teaching in Sunday School or church school is an important ministry.
- c)** Teachers need training even if they teach only one hour a week.
- d)** The church school has no real effect on the church as a whole.

3 List four possible avenues of outreach that the church school may have.

.....
.....
.....
.....



C. BIBLE STUDY CLASSES

Goal 3. State the advantages of Bible study classes.

Closely linked with church schools are Bible study classes. These classes, devoted to the study of the Scriptures, are usually attended by adults. They do not have the range of age levels as do the church schools although the studies may be divided into groups for men, women, and youth. Often larger churches divide their studies so that people may take classes that fit a particular need or interest.

Many churches conduct a midweek service that includes both a time for prayer and a period of Bible study. Pastors or lay leaders teach these classes.

Sessions may deal with a theme of the Bible, such as salvation; or the class may choose to study the life of a person, like Moses or David. The studies can also center on a section or passage of Scripture such as the Beatitudes or the book of James.

Interesting Bible studies taught under the anointing of the Holy Spirit is a blessing. Paul encourages, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another ” (Colossians 3:16). After the Day of Pentecost the apostles taught believers doctrines of faith, and through the years that followed, teaching was emphasized (Acts 19:9–10; 20:20).

A church deeply rooted in God's Word is a strong church that will not be easily swayed by strange doctrines. As we become spiritually mature, "we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming" (Ephesians 4:13–14).

Bible studies conducted in believers' homes have been successful. Classes are held during the week at a time and place suitable for a group of perhaps ten to twenty people. This form of study and sharing has the advantage of bringing the teaching of God's Word closer to the lives of those attending. In a home atmosphere people feel more free about sharing truths and experiences with each other.

In this system of home studies the teachers themselves often attend classes beforehand. Besides receiving this added help, the teacher must spend much time in prayer and preparation before giving the lesson to others.

Correspondence courses such as those offered by Global University are being used effectively by many groups. Sharing a series of lessons makes it more interesting for all. Certificates can be given to those who successfully complete a course.

Bible studies can also be conducted at camps or retreats. As people come away from home and work, they find more time for meditating on God's Word. Sound Bible study classes yield fruit. And when combined with prayer and waiting upon God they bear more fruit.

Application

- 4** Circle the letter in front of each correct completion to the sentence. One of the advantages of having Bible study groups is that
- a)** people often feel freer to share their experiences in an informal setting.
 - b)** they can be structured to fit a particular need or age group.
 - c)** group study can be both interesting and effective.
 - d)** it takes the place of going to church.

5 Our lesson suggested three possible ways to study in a Bible class. One was to choose a theme to study. The other two were to study

D. LAY LEADERS' TRAINING

Goal 4. Identify the purpose of lay leaders' training classes.

It is a pleasant spring evening and Mary and Timothy are walking home from church.

“What about this lay leaders’ class to begin tomorrow night, Timothy? What are lay leaders? Are you going?” asks Mary.

“No.” Timothy replies. “Lay leaders are people who have secular work, but also work in the church. They hold offices like elders, deacons, group leaders, and Sunday School teachers. Allen is one.”

“Allen is one what?” asks Allen as he catches up to walk with them.


“Wouldn’t you like to know!” laughs Timothy, teasing him. “But seriously, Allen, we were talking about your being a lay leader and about the training classes beginning tomorrow. You’re going, right?”

“Yes, indeed!” replies Allen. “I need all the training I can get! Being a leader in the Lord’s work is a big responsibility. You may sit in on the classes if you wish, Timothy. We need every leader that can be trained for the future. Our pastor and his assistants can’t take care of everything, especially as the church grows. We must free them so they can devote more time to spiritual ministry. In fact, all God’s people must be prepared for Christian service.”

First Timothy 3:1–7 lists high qualifications for all church leaders. They must be mature in the faith, be trustworthy, and lead respectable personal lives. Lay leaders training classes include Bible studies as well as practical helps for dealing

with people's needs and church matters. It is important for all those God has called into lay ministries to be trained for these responsibilities.

Application

- 6** Circle the letter in front of each correct completion to the sentence. Lay leaders training classes help to prepare workers
- a)** to teach biblical truths.
 - b)** to be pastors.
 - c)** for practical Christian service.
 - d)** for further responsibilities in the church.
-
- 

Check Your Answers

- 4** a) people often feel more free to share their experiences in an informal setting.
b) they can be structured to fit a particular need or age group.
c) group study can be both interesting and effective.
- 1** a) explaining
b) proclaiming
c) teaching
- 5** a Bible passage or the life of a person.
- 2** b) and c) are true.
- 6** a) to teach biblical truths.
c) for practical Christian service.
d) for further responsibilities in the church.
- 3** You may have listed any of the following: teaching children and young people, classes for the deaf, vacation Bible school, summer camps, Christian schools, adult education classes, or other forms of outreach that you know about.