

Bible Class in the Work of the Church

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Part I: Why a Bible Class?

A. Work of the Church

Before we answer the question Why a Bible Class? let us recall briefly what the work of the church is. The work of the church is clearly outlined in Eph. 4:11-15, "He gave some, apostles; and others, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfection of saints, for the work of the ministry, for the *edifying of the body of Christ*; till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ."

That, and that alone, is the work of the church. The work is spiritual and not social, economic, or political. Our chief aim must not be to have a large church membership and a full treasury; to keep our people in good humor; to have a filled church on Sundays and to develop a certain loyalty toward the local congregation. A church may have all that and yet be "poor and blind and naked." Our work in the church and school, ladies' aid, men's club, and societies must be to *edify the body of Christ*, to encourage growth in Christ and in Christian knowledge, and to guard against false and soul-destroying doctrines. If we would strictly adhere to that principle, we would not waste so much time on non-essentials but concentrate on the real work of the church, and that is to make Christ dearer to our people. We are all agreed on this principle, but when we study the history of congregations and read their "Messengers," we cannot but believe that we often lose ourselves in maze of uncertainties as to what the real work of the church is. We resort to artificial means to oil the congregational machinery. We duplicate the error of Sarah who, impatient with the slowness of the fulfillment of the promise, suggested to Abraham to obtain a son by Hagar. Being discouraged by the slowness of the progress of our congregation, we try to "pep up" our congregational life with our own flesh-born schemes. The result of such schemes is often disastrous.

We have but one thing to do, and that one thing we are to do with all our might. We are to nourish the body of Christ with the Word of truth. If we adhere to this program, we are not building on hay stubble and straw, but on gold and silver. If we adhere to this program, our work will not be consumed by fire, but will endure unto life everlasting.

Bible class fits into this program most beautifully. Bible class is a very *efficient* way to encourage growth in Christ. There is a crying *need* for Bible class in our day. If the home were doing its God-given duty, if the church pews were filled with young people Sunday for Sunday, the need of Bible class would not be as great. But, alas! the young people's problem today is not only *alarming* but in many cases appalling.

B. Need of Bible Class

How can we keep the young people from losing their part in the Lord Jesus and in the blessings of His altar? A denial of their Savior means the eternal loss of their immortal souls. What a dreadful calamity that would be! This problem has become a burning question within the church of today. Churches throughout the whole country are asking: "What can we do to keep our young people from forsaking their Savior?" It cannot be denied that there is an away-from-the-church movement among the young people of today. Church records

show that the older the confirmation classes get, the less frequently they partake of Holy Communion. Alas, some do not partake at all! What does that tell us? These young people no longer believe that they have sin, and that there is a devil and a hell, although they are in them over head and ears and doubly the devil's. If they believed that there is a hell and that they must be saved from their sins, they would not thus despise the Sacrament, but gladly receive Christ's body and blood as an assurance of the forgiveness of their sins. Youth of today is in great danger of losing the one thing needful, sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing His Word as Mary did. The Savior presents himself today in the swaddling bands of His holy Word. Despising of His Word and forsaking of His altar is, therefore, a denial of faith. If young people are no longer lovers of God's house, will we find them on their knees in the closet fellowship of Christ in prayer? If this young people's problem is not solved, three things will follow: Parents will see their children in hell, parents and pastors will be held accountable to God, and the church will have to mourn their eternal loss.

What causes this young people's problem? The *fault* must be placed at the *door of the home*. The home has failed to do its God-given duty. However, a part of the fault must be placed at the door of *the church*. Congregations that make little or no effort to maintain a Christian school, and to keep the young people with the church after they are confirmed, cannot wash their hands in innocence.

There are other things that separate between the youth and the church. Many movies and dance halls have had a disastrous influence on our young people. Add to this the anti-Christian element in the *education* of our public schools to which most of our church's youth is sent, in which emphasis is laid on enjoying this life, the Bible is ridiculed as a book of fables, and man is often presented as an ennobled monkey. Add to this the slimy, filthy, putrid literature which has flooded the Christian home and is being relished by both old and young alike. Add to this the evil companions on the street who tempt our boys and girls saying, "Let us eat and drink and be merry, for tomorrow we are dead." Add to this the so-called spirit of broad-mindedness which has made itself felt everywhere and the sneers at the things that were sacred to our forefathers. These are the elements of cleavage that wedge themselves between our youth and their church and Savior.

That is the problem that has set the church a-whirling like a merry-go-round. That is the *problem* that *cries for a solution*. But instead of solving the problem many churches have aggravated the problem by wailing and lamenting over the situation without earnestly endeavoring to find a God-pleasing solution. They fold their hands and do nothing. Thus the gap has been widened more and more, and when it gets too wide, the church tells them, you have no part in the Lord, and drops them from its register. That is the complicated young people's problem before us, and every concerned Christian will earnestly inquire of the Lord after a God-pleasing solution. What are we doing to solve this problem?

The young people's problem cannot be solved by turning our churches into social centers. There is reason to believe that that is often the purpose for the introduction of societies and social activities. It is, however, an empty dream to believe that altars in the church dedicated to the three dice, basketball, theatrical plays, bridge, suppers, socials, and other doings will save the souls of our young people. Some churches have been able to keep many young people with the church by creating an enthusiasm for the church with such affairs. Lest we forget, however, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Ro 14:17). Will the deck of cards and eating bring our young people one step closer to the Lord Jesus?

There is but one God-pleasing solution to the whole youth problem. Jesus Christ, the *Savior must be made more dear to our young people*. That is the *only* solution to the young people's problem. Jesus Christ must be taught and preached into the young hearts of our boys and girls who are in the formative period of their lives. Once Jesus and His saving love have laid hold on their hearts, no world, no power of hell will be able to wedge between them and their church.

If congregations and pastors, therefore, wish to discharge their duty toward the young people, they must make every possible effort to *teach* and to *preach Jesus* into their *hearts*. Christian schools must be established and maintained. Pastors, teachers, council members, visitors, and parents, all must join in making an earnest effort to gather our confirmed young people around God's altar, teach them to love the habitation of God's house, and the place where His honor dwelleth, and train them to be regular attendants at the house of God. We

must give them an opportunity for a *systematic study* of the *Bible*, do intensive *Bible class* work, and strive for 100 percent attendance.

Bible class is one of the *best means* to edify these young members of the body of Christ. Many of our young people come from unchurched homes where they receive little or no encouragement to attend divine services. And how many of our young people that come from the homes of Christian parents attend services regularly? Bible class is an important factor in encouraging regular church attendance. Regular Bible class attendants are usually good church-goers. Bible class should not take the place of church-going. But it is instrumental in filling the church. Where there is intensive Bible class work, where young people are being grounded and founded in God's Word, there church attendance will increase.

In Bible class the pastor is in *close contact* with these young members of the church. Here the work of the confirmation class is continued. Here the pastor has an opportunity to give them meat instead of milk. Here he is able to discuss with them the problems that are particular to their age; to give them an antitoxin against the evil influences of the school, workshop, and amusement hall; to have a heart-to-heart talk with them and to lead them in the way they should go. This personal and direct contact of the pastor with his young people is of utmost importance and one of the most efficient ways to train the young sapling that is to grow up into a sturdy oak. The Bible class should, therefore, occupy a very prominent place in the educational system of the congregation. It is the superstructure of the confirmation room, the continuation of that personal touch of the confirmation class.

Are our children well grounded and founded in God's Word when they stand at the altar and vow faithfulness to Jesus? Do our examinations before confirmation reveal a thorough understanding of the chief doctrines of the Bible? Generally speaking, that is not the case. And with these husks we send them out into the world to fight the fight of faith. They are to grow in Christian knowledge and not remain babes all their lives. They are to become "A perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." The Bible class offers us a wonderful opportunity to continue the indoctrination of our young people. A well indoctrinated congregation has a firm foundation. The *Northwestern Lutheran* writes, "The strength of our church will never exceed or be greater than the Christian knowledge of the individual member. Wherever the knowledge of the fundamentals of Christianity is on the wane or is entirely forgotten there Christianity itself has sung its swan song; there base substitutes for it have crept in." And, we may add, wherever churches are not well indoctrinated, there the line of demarkation that separates us from church bodies not one in faith and practice with us will soon be erased.

Part II: How to Conduct a Bible Class

A. Attendance

If we wish to conduct a Bible class, we must first of all have a Bible class, an enrollment, a Bible class attendance. Here is the sore spot. Many pastors would gladly conduct a Bible class, if the young people were interested and willing to attend. What, then, can be done to encourage faithful Bible class attendance?

We remember the Latin proverb, "*Ora et labora.*" Prayer is of utmost importance, but it must be followed by *work*. Victory lies in faithful effort. That is true with regard to Bible class attendance.

A pastor once said that the best way to accomplish things is to "button-hole" people. That is true. It is well to "button-hole" the young people and the parents at the beginning of the Bible class season. A *visit at the home* will, in most cases, assure a good attendance for the coming year. During these visits the pastor will have an opportunity to stress the youth problem and its solution. He will remind the parents of their sacred obligation toward their children, and the children of the necessity of sitting at Jesus' feet to hear and study His Word. The sum and substance of his visit will be to point out to parents and children the necessity and blessings of a Bible class. A *house-going pastor* will not only fill the pews, but also the Bible class room.

These Bible class *calls* should be *repeated* at the beginning of every Bible class season. The result warrants the effort. These calls may be very brief in the homes of faithful attendants. Five to ten calls can be

made in one evening, if was begin early. The last year's attendance record will be helpful in pointing out to our young people whether they were faithful attendants or not. A few weeks should be set aside for these calls.

A *lack of time* may make it impossible for pastors in large congregations to do this work. Most congregations, however, have less than 600 communicants. In such congregations the pastor should not find it too difficult to make these calls. If we devote some time to this work, it will require less time to *win back* the erring. In other words, if we devote more time to strengthening our young people in the faith, we will have less backsliders to look after. In large congregations the help of teachers and interested members could be enlisted to make these calls. Let's "button-hole" our young people. That is one way of gaining a Bible class.

The *pulpit* should be used to stimulate interest in Bible class. We must preach Bible class, *talk* Bible class, live Bible class. Bible class, like the work of the Synod, should constantly be kept before the people. Opportunities to remind them of Bible class present themselves everywhere, on the street, in the study during Communion announcement, and in the homes. We must make them *Bible class minded*. Once Bible class is a part of their congregational life, their regular routine, a good attendance will follow as naturally as the thunder the lightning. Wall-mottoes with the day and time of Bible class printed or written on them may be used as constant reminders. One of these mottoes should be hanging in every home where there are young people.

There will always be *delinquents* and disinterested young people in every congregation. Let us speak a word of *encouragement* to them when we meet them and thus point out to them what they have been missing. The result of such words of encouragement will be gratifying in many cases. Interested and tactful Bible class members may also be appointed to call on delinquents. *Follow-up* work is of greatest importance. In Bible class, like in all other work, we reap what we sow. Let us spend more time in making our young people *strong* in the Lord, and we will need *less time going after the lost*.

B. Lesson Preparation

A good attendance is the first thing that we must strive for. A good attendance, however, will soon dwindle if interesting and well-prepared lessons are not given at the Bible class meetings. Tasty and well-prepared food attracts the eaters. What Luther said about a good sermon is equally true with regard to a well-prepared and digested Bible class lesson. It fills the Bible class room. A pastor should, therefore, enter the class room *well-prepared*. Some pastors spend more time on the preparation of their Bible class lessons than they do on their sermons. God would have us give these advanced students of His Word meat and not milk. That requires prayer, meditation and study. Who enjoys eating stale bread? A stale, uninteresting lesson will soon empty the Bible class room.

Let us avoid *cut and dried* lessons prepared by others. There are few who can make flesh grow on a *skeleton*. Outlines, cut and dried lessons, are skeletons. These skeletons, in many cases, lead to a dry and mechanical presentation of the lesson. The young people are given bones instead of meat. It is no wonder that they lose interest. *PREPARE YOUR OWN LESSON. LET YOUR LESSON BE BORN IN YOUR OWN HEART. Was von Herzen kommt, geht auch gewöhnlich zu Herzen.* Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. *STUDY THE TEXT AND WITH IT THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF THE CLASS.* Combine the two, and you will find that you have an interesting and edifying lesson. If you feel incompetent to prepare a good lesson or if you are pressed for time, remember, a poor lesson born in your heart is better than a skeleton that has no life.

Exegetical material may be used to good advantage and is thought provoking. Matthew Henry, for example, offers many practical hints. The lesson should be carefully outlined on paper and entered into a loose loaf notebook. The numbers of the verses should be noted on the margin and under these numbers the thoughts, problems, and questions to be discussed in connection with each verse or group of verses. This will aid the pastor during the presentation of the lesson.

C. Practical Lessons

A Bible class lesson should be *practical*. It should be “*aus dem Leben für das Leben*.” The Bible is a very practical book; it is a narrative of God’s wonderful works among men and for men. Being filled with the Holy Ghost, the disciples began to preach the wonderful works of God. Even the doctrinal parts of the Bible are very practical and are never divorced from God’s dealings with men. A Bible class lesson should not be a dissertation or a cold explanation of the text or of some doctrine. Doctrines, indeed, should be expounded in connection with the text, but they should be taught in an exegetical historical way. We must translate the Bible into the lives of our Bible class members. That is what the Apostle did. Having called the Corinthians’ attention to Israel’s journey through the desert, Paul adds, “Now these things were *our examples*, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted” (1 Cor. 10:6). And again, “Now all these things happened unto them *for examples*; and they are written for our *admonition*, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor. 10:11). He, then, warns them against self-sufficiency, complacency, and false security. He applies the Old Testament story to the lives and needs of the readers of the epistle. That is practical and concrete teaching. And so we must study the problems, needs, and dangers of our young people in connection with the text and apply it accordingly. Our members are sin-sick, Jesus Christ is a Physician who has a healing balm for every woe. Let us study these woes and apply the right salve to heal them. That is not theoretical but practical work. Our Bible class lesson should be a *message*. To find a *practical angle* for each verse or group of verses is the most difficult part of the preparation.

Here are a few concrete examples. Does not the story of Lamech (Genesis 4), who forgetful of the coming of the Savior and of the life to come, concentrated on human progress and on making this world a better place in which to live invite a discussion of a similar trend in our day? Should not the dangers of intermarriage be discussed in connection with Genesis 6:1ff? Can we neglect to point out how the fall and repentance of Noah (Genesis 9:20ff), this mighty man of God, may be a comfort to boys and girls who have fallen into a similar sin? If Noah was saved by the grace of God, there must be hope for every penitent sinner.

Thus, if we carefully examine each verse or group of verses, we will find that it contains some *practical thought* for the lives of our young people. Although the Bible is an ancient book dealing with a time far remote from our own, it is very up-to-date. Each verse or group of verses was inspired by the Holy Ghost for our example, admonition and comfort. It is the pastor’s duty to find these practical lessons the Holy Ghost would teach us and to apply them directly to the lives of our church’s youth. In applying the text, let us not deal with generalities that suggest nothing, but with *definite, specific* things that will remind them of actual experiences and happenings in life. Let us not speak of the concept cow, of “*gemalte Sünden*” (painted sins). If we speak of realities, of Jones’ cow, the class will know whereof we are speaking and will be interested. A cold explanation of the text leaves the heart cold, but a practical discussion makes the text live. A Bible class lesson should be practical. Practical lessons are enjoyable and fill the class room.

D. Presentation of the Lesson

Before discussing a chapter or a portion of a chapter, it should be *read by members* of the class. Selecting the proper readers requires tact on the part of the pastor. Poor and extremely timid readers feel embarrassed and, in some cases, refuse to attend for fear of being called on to read. For the same reason it is inadvisable to have each member read a verse. Let us choose willing and fluent readers. Such reading will be a great aid to the class in becoming acquainted with the contents of the chapter. A discussion should follow the reading of the lesson.

How should we proceed with the *discussion*? Each verse or, group of verses, should be discussed separately. Each verse may suggest one or more practical lessons to us. In that case each verse should be analyzed separately. If a group of verses suggests one or more practical thoughts to us, the group of verses should be treated as a unit. E.g., Genesis 6:1-2—Dangers of inter-marriage; v. 3—God’s patience with fallen church members; v. 4-5—wickedness on earth before the end of the world (cross references should be used); v. 6—God often changes His course of action when men forsake His ways; v. 7—What does World War II tell us? etc. Let us *proceed slowly* and digest the material thoroughly. That will make the chapter live and linger long in

the memory of the young people. They will take the lesson home, into the shop, and wherever they go. If a train moves too swiftly, the passengers will see little of the beautiful scenery. The landscapes they saw will soon fade from their memory. It is the slow-moving train that gives an opportunity to feast our eyes on the beauties of God's creation. We shall come back to this point in another paragraph.

How should the lesson be presented? Above all, let us *avoid the lecture method*. The leader of the Bible class should *not do all the talking*. The lecture method usually discourages thinking, invites dreaming, and is tiresome. It often leaves the class inactive and, in many cases, spells the death of the class. It treats the class like a *sponge* that is expected to absorb, but has no opportunity to take part in the pumping. It does not give the Bible students a chance to voice their sentiment, reaction, problems, fears, and doubts.

The Bible class should, therefore, be encouraged to take an active part in the discussion. That may be a difficult matter in the beginning, but perseverance will finally succeed. Active participation in the discussion can best be achieved by using what we might term the "*PROBLEM METHOD*." One or more problems should be presented to the class in connection with each verse or group of verses and the class should be asked to solve them. Let us ask *practical, thought-provoking questions* and let the class find the answers. These problems should be outlined in the notes under the numbers of the verses to which they pertain. These thought-provoking questions will *stimulate thinking*, invite a discussion, impress the text on the students, and make the lesson both interesting and edifying. Our object must be to make people *think* along religious lines. If we succeed in doing that, we will have their interest and encourage them to do more thinking when they listen to sermons. There is too much spiritual lethargy among our members when religious matters are discussed. The problem method will help them overcome this drowsiness.

*What is the Problem method? A few examples will serve as an illustration. Genesis 2:21-22—*Why did the Lord take the woman out of man and not of the dust of the ground? Answer: To show that the two are one flesh and that what God has joined together man should not put asunder. *Genesis 9:1—*God saved eight people alive and instructed them to multiply. Why did He not destroy all sinful flesh and create a new and holy race? Answer: He promised the sinful race a Savior. Faithful is He that promises. *Exodus 7:10-13—*After Moses had performed his miracles, the magicians of Pharaoh did likewise. Was that a sign that they, too, were of God? The Christian Scientists and Spiritualists claim the power to do wonders. Is that a sign that they are of God? Answer: They have no command and promise from God as Moses did and, therefore, are practicing superstition. *Genesis 16:1-3—*What prompted Abraham to have a son by his maid? Was it lust? Answer: It was a lack of faith in the power of God to fulfill His promise. When do congregations commit this same sin? Answer: When they resort to their own schemes to supplement the power of the Word of God. *Genesis 39:9—*Joseph refused to yield to his temptress. According to this verse what will lead you young people to lead a chaste and decent life? Answer: The desire to please God, who saves me. The fear and love of God, etc.

Such questions cover a large area and *stimulate thinking*. We may enlarge on some of these *questions*, ask *additional* questions, and if the subject is important, *go far afield*. In connection with the creation of the woman, for example, additional questions could be asked concerning the sacredness and indissolubility of the marriage vow. The story of Abraham and Hagar suggests additional questions concerning the methods and schemes congregations use to supplement the power of the Gospel and the dreadful results that follow such flesh-born schemes.

If the class is unable to solve the problem, don't give up and solve it for them. *Explain your question*. Ask *additional, explanatory questions*. E.g., Congregational treasuries are often empty, church services poorly attended, and in many places young people are losing interest in their church. Now what earth-born schemes are we inclined to use to supplement the power of the Gospel? Above all, let us use many *cross references* to throw a light on the verse we are discussing and to help them answer the thought-provoking question we are asking. If they cannot answer the question, "Why did God take Eve out of Adam?" let them read Mt. 19:4-6. If they cannot answer the question, "Why are signs and wonders not always a sign that preachers and teachers are of God?" let them read Deut. 13:1-6. These cross references should be carefully chosen during preparation of the lesson and added to the notes.

Cross references should also be used frequently to enlarge on the verse or group of verses we are discussing. In connection with Joseph's victory over his temptress have the class read 1 Cor. 3:16-17 and 1 Cor. 6:15-20. The young people enjoy cross reference work. These cross references will deepen the impression made by the story, add fuel to the fire created by the text, and acquaint the class with many other parts of the Bible. They help the class to understand the verse we are discussing.

Whole doctrines can briefly be discussed in connection with the story the class is studying. If we study these doctrines in their historical setting, our lesson will be very concrete and not an abstract, theoretical dissertation. E.g., in Genesis 15:6 we read, "Abraham believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness." How can we, in connection with this story, refrain from calling the attention of the class to what Abraham believed, what he saw from afar, and why the Lord declared him righteous? How can we neglect to refer the class to Romans 4:1-5 and to ask the class whether Abraham was justified by works or through faith in the Savior. Thus the doctrine of justification can be discussed on the basis of Genesis 15. Does not the story of Pharaoh's hardening of heart, recorded in chapters 7-10 of the book of Exodus, invite a discussion of the *doctrine of conversion* and the hardening of hearts? While studying these chapters, the class should be asked to read Rom. 9:15-23. Questions should be asked concerning God's patience and sincerity in dealing with Pharaoh; Pharaoh's reaction to God's merciful appeal; the progressiveness of the hardening of his heart; the end of God's patience and God's hardening of Pharaoh's heart; the time of grace allotted to all men; where the fault lies if men are not converted; what accounted for the conversion of Moses and his brother; and in what way Pharaoh is a warning to us. Heb. 3:12-15 should be read as a warning after studying Pharaoh's hardening of heart. Let us not forget to make *good use of cross references*. That will acquaint the class with many *other parts* of the Bible. Let the members of the class read the cross references.

Entire doctrines should not be discussed with every chanter. That would retard our progress too much. Entire doctrines, however, may be discussed in their historical setting wherever a wonderful opportunity presents itself, and where the *New Testament* uses an *Old Testament story to illustrate a certain doctrine*. That is what Paul does when he speaks of the expulsion of Hagar and her son (Gal. 4:21-31).

A word about *answering questions*. If no one volunteers to answer, individuals should be *asked directly*. Ask individuals to express their thoughts on the subject. Here, again, extreme tact should be exercised. Timid and sensitive souls are easily offended when they cannot answer or when they display their ignorance by giving the wrong answer. The Pastor should never resort to sarcasm or in any way show his displeasure when the class reveals its ignorance. That breeds ill will and intimidates the members. We must do all within our power to encourage the greatest possible participation in the discussion.

Homework is inadvisable. It discourages attendance. There may be a few members who welcome homework, but that desire is not general. Our young people are not at college or seminary, where we can demand homework.

E. Length of Text

How much should a *lesson cover*? Some lessons should cover more ground than others, depending upon the importance of the chapter. Generally speaking, we ought to proceed slowly and discuss each chapter thoroughly. After children have received milk, they are ready for meat—the deeper things of God. Some may believe in making a beeline through the Bible, in touching on the highlights. If we do that, if we proceed too rapidly, the members will understand and remember little or nothing. A beeline without thorough homework will accomplish little. A bee *laden* with honey makes a beeline. If our young people were *filled* with Bible knowledge, we could make a beeline through the Bible. But that is not the case. A beeline, too, discourages the problem method and necessitates lecturing. It takes time to discuss each verse or group of verses, to look beneath each stone to find the pearls that may be hidden there, and to translate the chapter into the lives of our young members. It matters little whether we cover a whole chapter or a few verses, so long as the class has been edified and strengthened in faith. A class may spend 4-6 years on the book of Genesis, depending upon the number of lessons given during the course of the year. A thorough discussion teaches our people how to study

the Bible, to examine each verse to find the gems that may be hidden there. A superficial study of the Bible will be of little value.

F. Choice of Material

What part of the Bible should be studied? Some use timely and appropriate topics and study them in connection with certain passages gathered from various books of the Bible. Others expound certain doctrines, basing their discussion on a number of Bible stories and prooftexts. Still others believe in studying hymns and creeds of the Lutheran church. Others wander from one book of the Bible to another, choosing certain texts that might be of greatest interest and benefit to the class.

The best way, however, is to *study whole books of the Bible*, chapter for chapter. That preserves continuity and chronology. That gives the class the setting and the context for each new lesson. That is of great importance, for it helps the class to understand the new lesson. The book of *Genesis* is one of the best books to begin with. It is a wonderful unfolding of God's plan of salvation. The book of Acts or the four Gospels are other books that could be chosen. Avoid difficult books for beginners. A careful study of these books will suggest the discussion of many timely and practical topics.

G. Time of Lesson

Let us remember that *overfeeding kills the appetite*, while underfeeding doesn't make it worthwhile to come to Bible class. The length of lesson should be one hour, no more and no less. If the lesson is practical and edifying, the class will enjoy an hour's discussion of a part of God's holy Book. Let us begin with *prayer*, and then proceed with the *reading* and *discussion* of the text in the manner outlined. The lesson should be concluded with *roll call*, a *collection*, and a *prayer*.

Some Bible classes meet every week, others twice or three times a month. It would seem that *two meetings a month is sufficient*. Let us remember that some of our young people take part in other activities of the congregation, such as choir, etc. If those young people are asked to meet too frequently, participation in one or the other of these activities will suffer. It is well to have two well attended Bible classes than two poorly attended meetings. If the class meets on the first and third Thursdays of the month, and the month has five Thursdays, it would be well to meet on the fifth Thursday also.

H. After Bible Class

What should follow Bible class? There should be but one answer: *Home Sweet Home*. Some may think that Bible class without a social program is impossible. They believe that a little fun after Bible class will stimulate Bible class attendance. That reminds one of baiting a hook, or of attending Sunday school for the sake of winning a button. Our young people should attend Bible class because the Lord Jesus wants them to search the Scriptures that they might find eternal life in them. We should constrain them to attend out of love for the Word, which is able to save their souls. Our young people must not attend Bible class because they will miss a good time if they are not present. And how much time can we devote to Bible study, if it is followed by a social hour? Some classes devote one meeting a month to Bible study, and the other to a business meeting, fun, and play. One hour a month for Bible study is not sufficient.

A *social hour* after Bible class is *not sinful*. Why should not a well attended Bible class, that has found joy and delight in searching God's Book, meet for a social hour? And yet these social affairs that follow Bible class at least in many cases, finally act like a borer in a cornstalk. They often destroy the interest in Bible study. The emphasis is shifted from Bible study to "having fun." The fun becomes a sponge that absorbs all the interest. These social activities are looked upon as church work, and they begin to supplant the interest in the real work of the Bible class, the study of God's Word. And when the social program, too, becomes monotonous and unattractive, the Bible class dies a natural death, and no amount of "pepping up" or artificial stimulation

will revive it. Wherever that is the case, these social programs after Bible class are altogether out of place and no more permissible adiaphora, for they are making the cross of Christ of none effect, taking the place thereof, and hindering the real work of the church, the edification of the body of Christ. Let us give our Bible classes a well-prepared, spiritual, edifying feast, and it will not be necessary to whet their appetites with artificial means. Let us put our *confidence in the Word of God*, and we will find that our Bible classes will be a success.

Young people should not be denied the privilege to meet in a social way. If these social evenings are conducted properly, they may be conducive to Christian fellowship. These social functions, however, should not follow Bible study; neither should there be too many of them lest they interfere with the all-important work of the Bible class. Let us be wise and not overemphasize these social functions, lest our young people lose sight of the real purpose of Bible class and seek the meat that perisheth instead of the meat that endureth unto life eternal.

Part III. Organization of a Bible Class

Bible classes should *not* be organized; neither is it necessary to elect officers. A treasurer should be appointed by the pastor. Bible classes should not be an organization within the congregation. Much has been said about this subject. Prof. Kowalke in his paper on "The Church and Its Youth" has most convincingly pointed out the dangers of such organizations within the congregation. He has pointed out three dangers inherent in such organizations:

1. They are a threat to the unity of the church.
2. They so easily instill in the members a wrong conception of their calling before God as children of the family and as members of the church.
3. They so easily develop a false conception of what constitutes church work. An organized Bible class society with a group of self-assertive officers at the head may become a thorn in the flesh of the pastor. (*Theologische Quartalschrift*, vol. 34, no. 4, Oct. 1937)

These dangers should *keep us* from *organizing* our Bible classes. The pastor should be and remain the *head* of the Bible class and conduct any business meeting that may be necessary. It should *not* be *necessary* to "join" a Bible class. *All* members of the congregation should be made to feel that they are members of the Bible class and that they are expected to attend. Membership in an organization is to them the assumption of certain duties which they do not already have as members in their church. That is the thought that keeps many from joining a society. We need no organization.

If we have more than one Bible class, *divisions* are necessary. That is what we mean when we speak of organizing our Bible classes. Divisions should be made along *natural lines*. For various reasons the Bible class for the married and the unmarried should be conducted separately. The treatment of the text and the application will be different in each class.

Where a large enrollment necessitates several divisions among the young people, the junior B class should consist of the last two or three confirmed classes, and the junior A of the rest of the young people. In rural congregations, however, where the transportation is a vital factor, it is best to have but one class for the young people, and one for the married folks.

And now, brethren, let us all put our shoulder to the wheel and solve the young people's problem. Let us all use the God-given means for a God-pleasing solution. Let us do intensive Bible class work.

Part V. Sample Bible Studies

Note: It is not necessary to use all of these questions. If the questions are too difficult, explain them; awaken interest in them; give them a hint; use Bible passages to throw a light on them. Don't answer them yourself. Practice will make perfect. Let the class read the cross references and find the desired proof in them. Don't use

these questions in a mechanical way. Ask additional questions to enlarge on them. Add what the class doesn't know. *But don't start to lecture.* Let the class read the chapter first, then read each verse of group of verses again before you discuss it. Constantly refer to the verse or group of verses when you ask your questions.

Genesis, Chapter One

Word	Verse	Questions/Notes
Beginning Create God Heaven	1	<p><i>When</i> was the beginning? How do we <i>know</i>? Cf. Gen. 5:5ff What does the <i>world believe</i> concerning the age of the earth? What word indicates that God made things <i>differently</i> than we do? What does “create” <i>mean</i>? <i>Why</i> can God create? Cf. Rom. 1:20 Why is the creation of the world a matter of faith and not of reason? Cf. Heb. 11:3 Who believes the <i>greater miracle</i>, the Christian or the atheist who says, “No Creator”? <i>Why</i>? Why should the power of God be a <i>comfort</i> and <i>warning</i> to us? Cf. James 4:12 Why did a young man on his <i>deathbed</i> ask his pastor to read Gen. 1? Almighty, resurrection. What is <i>evolution</i>? Athanasius Kirchner, a Christian astronomer, had a beautiful, costly, globe standing on his desk. One day an atheist entered his study and, pointing to the globe, asked how he got it. Kirchner answered, “I don’t know. It must have come here by accident.” The atheist felt insulted and asked him whether he was trying to ridicule him. “It is nonsense,” he said, “to believe that this globe came into your study by accident.” “That is what you believe concerning this earth of which this globe is but a very small image,” replied the Christian astronomer. What are some of the questions evolutionists <i>cannot answer</i>? How do you see from verse one that <i>nature</i> is not God, but that God is a personal God? Cf. Ps. 90:2 What is pantheism? Read Ps. 14:1. What does the word “<i>heaven</i>” (upper regions) <i>include</i>? Cf. Col. 1:16 Who, according to the First Article, was the Creator?</p>
Form – void Spirit Was – hover	2	<p>In what respect was the world waste and empty? Who is this Spirit? What did the Holy Spirit hovering over the water-covered, formless, empty and lifeless world <i>impart to it</i>? (Power, life) What do we <i>call these forces</i>? Nature, etc. (ability to produce, etc.) What then is the <i>origin</i> of the much spoken of forces of nature? Since only power and motion can produce power and motion, what is the atheist’s <i>answer to the question</i> of the <i>origin of power</i>? Cf. Rom. 1:22</p>
Said	3	<p>By <i>what</i> did God create all things? Cf. Heb. 11:3 <i>Who</i> was this word? Cf. John 1:1-5 Who, then is the <i>true God</i> according to Gen. 1:1-3? What are all <i>other gods</i>? Cf. Is. 42:8 <i>Name churches</i> and <i>organizations</i> that have false gods.</p>

Light		Why is this light a mystery to us? Cf. Gen. 1:14
Divided Day, first	4-5	What then is the origin of night and day? What does the <i>evolutionist</i> believe concerning the <i>length</i> of Creation days? How does v. 5 refute this and show that a day of <i>24 hours is meant</i> ? Why do evolutionists and atheists <i>contradict the Bible</i> ? Reason, salve conscience, etc.
Firmament	6-8	What <i>other names</i> have we for firmament? Firmament means to <i>hammer</i> or to <i>flatten out</i> . Expanse. What <i>shape</i> did God give the firmament? What did God put into the lower part of the firmament? Cf. Gen. 2:6 What into the upper part? Cf. Gen. 1:14 How do you see the <i>goodness of God</i> in giving us the firmament? For what are men using the firmament now? Planes, etc. What did Ezekiel see above the firmament? Cf. Ezek. 1:26ff
Gather Earth, sea	9-10	What <i>power did God put into the earth</i> to draw the water into the deep basins and riverbeds that He made? Read <i>Ps. 104:5-9</i> . Why, according to Ps. 104:9, are we safe from the mighty waters of the ocean? What was God's purpose in making dry land? (home, food for man) For whom, then, was this universe made? (man) If God made this all for us, what does that tell you about God? (Love)
Grass – seed Seed Grass – tree	11-13	Which was <i>first</i> , the grass or the seed? How does v. 11 <i>explain the origin</i> of life? What did God <i>impart to the earth</i> to produce this <i>miracle</i> ? What do <i>evolutionists</i> and <i>atheists</i> believe concerning the origin of life? Since only life can produce life, what great miracle do they believe? Pastor may explain attempts to explain origin of life. Man said to boy, “Where did you get that bread?” “From the baker.” “Where did he get it?” “From the miller.” “From the farmer.” “From God.”—“So where did you get that bread?” “From God.” What arrangement did God make to <i>multiply</i> the plants? According to v. 11, into how many classes can you divide plants? 1) Grass 2) Herb 3) Tree of fruit
Kind Good	12	Why is it impossible (v. 12) to grow <i>potatoes</i> on <i>apple trees</i> or to develop a rosebush into a peach tree according to v. 12? What are some of the kinds that <i>cannot be crossed</i> ? What does the word “kind” tell us about <i>evolution</i> which tells us that all plants evolved from a simple form? What was <i>Luther Burbank</i> able to do? (Varieties within kind) What happens when we let these artificially produced varieties grow wild? (Revert to original kind) How do we see from v. 12 that we cannot <i>blame God</i> for any imperfections on earth? (Some say, “God made me that way.”) Where do these imperfections in man and nature come from? How do you see the <i>goodness of God</i> in creating plants? Cf. Ps. 104:14 How does a rose, a flower, a whole creation, speak of <i>God's wisdom</i> ? Read Ps. 104:24 and Ps. 139:14.
Lights Divide, signs, etc.	14-16	What are these lights? What are the six purposes of these lights and what are they? Cf. Mt. 16:1-3

Two lights Stars	16	<p>Which are they? How <i>many</i>, according to scientists? Who was asked to <i>count</i> them and was unable to? How <i>far</i> are they away, according to scientists? (light years) How <i>big</i> are they, in comparison to the earth? (Many 1000 times) What is so <i>marvelous</i> about their course? (figures: Circle, oblong, one, etc., yet never collide) What did the psalmist <i>exclaim</i> when he looked to the heavens? Read Ps. 19:1. <i>What glory</i> of God do the heavens declare? What <i>tribes worship</i> the sun or the stars because they are so marvelous? How did <i>planets come into existence</i>, according to evolutionists? (Parts that separated from the sun, like mud from a wagon wheel) Why then is it that some move <i>right</i> and another <i>left</i>? (they cannot explain)</p>
Light, day, night	17-18	<p>See from this verse that the earth is the center of the universe? (Sun, moon, and stars must serve the earth, the <i>home of man</i>) What, then, is the value of man in God's sight? Read Ps. 8:3-4. Etc.</p>

Genesis, Chapter Six

Word	Verse	Questions/Notes
Multiply Sons God, daughters men Fair	1-2	<p>Why multiply faster than in our day? Cf. Gen. 5:2-3 What often increases with the population? Cf. Prov. 29:16 Who are these sons and daughters? Cf. Gen. 4:25-26 and Gen. 4:17ff. What were these Cainites? (unbelievers); Sethites? (believers) What decided the choice of a mate? Why is this poor judgment? (Beauty skin deep; devil often under it) What beauty should we look for when choosing a mate? Cf. 1 Pet. 3:1-6 Whose advice did these young people neglect, being Sethites? Why is it necessary to seek the advice of our Christian parents? What should be the deciding factor in choosing a mate? What are the dangers of a mixed marriage? A Catholic? (contract, etc.) A Baptist? (Baptism) An Adventist? (Day of the Lord) etc. Mixed marriages forbidden in the Old Testament. Cf. Dt. 7:3-4; 1 Kings 11:1-4; Ezra 9:1-2 Which part usually wins in a mixed marriage, the believer or unbeliever? What problems are there in mixed marriages when children are born? Can a Lutheran bride promise to bring up her children Catholic?</p>
Spirit Strive Not always	3	<p>The Word was preached in those days, the Spirit was active, parents advised against these mixed marriages. But what do many young people do according to v. 3? (Harden, strive against the Holy Spirit) What is the hardening of our hearts? (Refusal to believe) Cf. Acts 8:51 Why are these disobedient children playing with fire according to v. 3?</p>

Flesh 120 years		<p>What is impossible after the Spirit forsakes us? Cf. Exodus 9:12 What does the Bible call this sin and what is its result? Cf. Mt. 12:31-32 What is the root of the hardening of our hearts? Gal. 5:16-21 How do you see God's patience with the people of Noah's day? We wonder why God lets people, who reject the advice of Christian parents and resist the Word of God, live. Why does He? Cf. Rom. 2:4</p>
Wickedness, evil Giants Renown Wickedness	4-5	<p>How do the children of these mixed marriages usually <i>turn out</i>, according to v. 4-5? Can you think of some reasons why they usually turn out that way? Why do 20 million children in the United States receive no religious instructions? What do you suppose these men of great <i>strength</i> used their power for? Does this description fit our day? (Might makes right) What do you suppose those men were <i>renowned</i> for? What were these godless people renowned for? (heroic deeds, money, society, finance, etc.) What people get the most notoriety in our <i>newspapers</i>? What's the <i>greatest</i> thing to be renowned for? Cf. Luke 10:19-20 According to Christ's words, in what did this wickedness consist? Cf. Mt. 24:36-39 Why was their eating, drinking, and marrying wrong? Cf. Phil. 3:19 How does our day compare with Noah's day? Have we Christians been affected?</p>
Heart		<p>What is the source of this wickedness, according to this verse?</p>