

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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The “Non-Class” churches of Christ

(Jerry Fite)

Many of our young people do not know some churches who claim to be the church of Christ do not believe it is Scriptural to have Bible classes in the church. Dividing an assembly into groups for teaching has no scriptural authority in their thinking. Since they believe there is no authority for Bible classes, they are against women teaching young children or other women in such an arrangement. They also oppose the church using uninspired, and graded teaching materials.

Different people teaching simultaneously in one place occurred as the apostles of Christ carried out the Lord’s commission to preach and teach the saving gospel. The apostles were seen “standing and teaching in the temple” (Acts 5:25). Simultaneous teaching was practiced by the apostles from the very beginning (cf. Acts 2:4,6,7,14), and is therefore an approved apostolic example for us. The Bible class arrangement is the simultaneous teaching of God’s Word.

God recognizes that people are at different stages of knowledge and maturity in the word. People maturing from

“babes to “full-grown men”, progress from the “milk” to “solid food” of the word in their understanding (*Hebrews 5:11-14*). Bible classes, recognizing this fact, teach the word on the various levels of understanding.

While women are not authorized to teach over a man (*1 Timothy 2:12*), they are authorized to teach others, which could be from children (*2 Timothy 2:2*), unto other women (*Titus 2:3-5*). A Bible class comprised of younger women with an older woman teaching would be authorized as other teachers are teaching at the same time in separate classes.

In 1946, South Houston Bible Institute was founded by G.W. Shelburne, Jr., a non-class advocate. The Institute’s mission is to teach God’s word for free, as it receives funds from individuals and churches. The Institute teaches simultaneously at different locations with women teaching some of those classes. One of their classes is how “to develop useful teaching materials”. Where is the Scriptural authority for churches to support institutions to do the work the church is authorized to do (cf. *Ephesians 4:11-16*)? Is it not hypocritical for a church to support the devel-

opment of the same material they consider to be wrong to use?

These churches often manifest a “social gospel” agenda for the church. A non-class group near my house introduced themselves to our neighborhood by sponsoring a carnival with moon walks and games. They may be “non-class”, but they are “pro-fellowship hall” for social gatherings for pot-lucks and dominos.

It is a paradox to appear so conservative (non-class) but so liberal (institutional, social gospel). The irony is solved partly by their perversion of Romans 14 and the unity and diversity error they have embraced. Denominations and pro-class churches of Christ seem to be comfortable with opening their facilities for the non-class sponsored South Houston Bible institute to operate. Being “non-class” is not necessarily “anti-class”. Being “non-class” is not necessarily “anti-quartets in concerts of praise” when worshipping together in song. Young people, when Romans 14 is perverted, and the error of unity and diversity embraced; ultra-liberalism and denominationalism are not far from the horizon. Don’t ever tire of revisiting the truth of Romans 14!